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A DICTIONARY OF  
THEATRICAL  
TERMS

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**A DICTIONARY OF FORCES' SLANG**

*(With Eric Partridge & Frank Roberts)*

**SEA SLANG OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY**

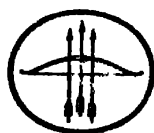
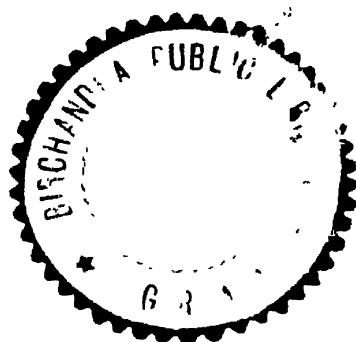
WILFRED GRANVILLE

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A DICTIONARY OF  
THEATRICAL TERMS

Drama: *What literature does at night*

GEORGE JEAN NATHAN



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FOR  
•ERIC PARTRIDGE  
SCHOLAR, HUMANIST  
AND GOOD FRIEND



## FOREWORD

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'I PRESUME thou wilt be very inquisitive to know what antick or personate actor this is, that so insolently intrudes upon this common theatre . . . whence he is, why he doth it and what he hath to say. . . .' Thus Robert Burton in *Democritus to the Reader*, the introduction to his wise, entertaining and wholly delightful *magnum opus*, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. So might the reader of this record of theatre speech ask by what authority the writer has compiled his glossary.

The answer is that, during several years of active engagement in the theatre—as actor, producer, stage director and, occasionally, acting manager—I felt that such a book, hitherto unattempted, was urgently needed, and that a record of the technical, colloquial and slang speech of the twentieth century stage should be made before many terms and phrases used by 'old Pros' died with their passing. So the 'dressing-room jottings', remembered conversations—whether at the Ivy, at theatrical gatherings, or on train-calls during provincial tours—and much reading, mainly *ad hoc*, have resulted in the following pages in which, I hope, a not inadequate account has been rendered of the language of the theatre.

That there will be other glossaries, I have no doubt, and I am conscious of omissions of terms that may have been coined since the commencement of this work. In so vast a field complete comprehensiveness is not possible, and I ask indulgence if a searcher's pet terms and phrases are not found. But, in order that such terms (provided they are not merely *nonce* words) may not be lost to the language, I should be grateful for notes, or lists, of words or phrases worthy of preservation and of value to the glossary. Cockney rhyming slang, though extensively used in vaudeville theatres, is not strictly eligible since it has been adopted from Cockneydom and is not indigenous to the theatre. I have, however, included a limited number of the common rhyming terms, as I have a number of

## FOREWORD

*Parlyaree* phrases or words (e.g. *scarper*, *letty*, etc.), although the use of this odd speech is far less common now than in the Victorian era. Most of these words and phrases (see *Parlyaree* in the glossary) come from the circus or fairgrounds, booth theatres, or fit ups.

I have thought it prudent to record a few 'critics' words', such as *catharsis* and *resolution*, and a number of technical terms used in the sciences of elocution and phonetics, since these terms may be met in theatre literature and in reviews in the journals and newspapers.

An apprenticeship with a famous 'Shakespearean Company'; membership of the last company to tour the 'celebrated Compton Comedy Company'; engagements in provincial touring companies; resident repertory, in opera, and in the West End of London have afforded an inside knowledge of the theatre without which this dictionary could not have been compiled. And I am indebted to the following for most valuable and unselfish assistance in my work: the dedicatee, Eric Partridge, for allowing me to graze in the theatrical pastures of his *Dictionary of Slang*, and *Name into Word*;

Sir St Vincent Troubridge, who gave me access to his scholarly notes on theatre speech, and permitted me to consult the relevant passages in his valuable contributions to the periodical *Notes and Queries*, entitled 'Notes on the Oxford English Dictionary'; Christopher Fry for helpful communications; Cyril Chamberlain, London stage and film artiste, and friend of my theatre days, for a useful and pellucidly annotated list of stage managerial and other terms. I am particularly grateful to the directors of the Strand Electric and Engineering Company Ltd, who generously allowed me to quote material from their excellent little glossary of *Technical Theatrical Terms* edited by A. O. Gibbons, with collaborators.

To my American publishers, The Philosophical Library Inc., New York, I am indebted for matter contained in their *Encyclopædia of the Arts*, edited by Dr Dagobert D. Runes and Harry G. Schrickel (New York), and to Joseph T. Shipley, who has kindly given me *carte blanche* in respect of the terms in his scholarly work *A Dictionary of Word Origins*, also published by the Philosophical Library.

Of the theatre friends who have helped me in various ways I would particularize Marjorie Ames, who, in addition to making sound suggestions, supplied a number of musical comedy terms, and Elizabeth Keen, who lent me material and whose amusing conversation brought to mind several half-forgotten terms.

In treating of etymologies my debts to Walter W. Skeat, H. C.

## FOREWORD

Wyld, Ernest Weekley, and the Oxford English Dictionary are obvious.

Words derived from the Greek have been transliterated for the convenience of the reader.

A dictionary of this kind is necessarily discursive and if I have seemed to 'spread myself' in biographical notes my excuse is that the people mentioned have done valuable service to the stage and their names deserve more than casual treatment.

Full acknowledgment has been made in the text to authors whose works I have consulted and I apologize to those authors whose names I may have inadvertently omitted.

WILFRED GRANVILLE



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## A DICTIONARY OF THEATRICAL TERMS

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### A

**Abbey, the.** The Abbey Theatre, Dublin, the first Irish national theatre, which was founded by the late Miss C. C. F. Horniman in 1904. Under the vigorous direction of the poet W. B. Yeats (born 1865, Senator of the Irish Free State from 1922 and a Nobel Prize winner) and Lady Gregory, the Abbey Theatre became the focal point of the Irish literary movement. The early works of J. M. Synge, Lord Dunsany and others were first produced here. This theatre was destroyed by fire.

**above and below** (stage furniture). The direction 'cross *above* settee' is used in preference to 'cross behind settee', likewise an artiste crosses *below* rather than in front of furniture. This usage was determined by the UP and DOWN STAGE direction, q.v.

**acoustics.** The properties of hearing in a theatre. The phenomena of sound. Special materials which deaden the transmission of noise are used in the building of modern theatres, especially opera houses. The word derives from the Greek *akoucin*, to hear.

**act.** To portray a character in a play or perform upon the stage as singer or variety artiste. (2) A vaudeville turn. (3) One of the periods into which the action of a play is divided.

**act-change.** See CHANGE AN ACT.

**act-drop.** See CURTAIN.

**act-wait.** The interval (American *intermission*) between the acts of a play. The ENTR'ACT.

**act well** (of a play). Easy to produce or perform. Having all the attributes of dramatic art; good lines and plenty of scope for histrionics. 'What's the new play like?' 'It ought to run, it *acts well* in rehearsal, but you never can tell how these turn out on production.' Often a play has shown promise at rehearsals and fallen flat 'on the night'.

**actable** (of parts). Offering opportunities for the exercise of dramatic

## **acting area**

art, as distinct from the CUP-AND-SAUGER rôle in which a player sits on the stage uttering epigrams.

**acting area.** That section of the stage set for the performance. The area round the furniture and within the LIGHTING AREA.

**acting area lantern.** A circular floodlight suspended on a batten immediately above the acting area.

**acting lady.** An inferior actress; one who hopes that her appearance and dignity will compensate for her lack of histrionic ability. The term, now obsolete, dates from the time of Mrs Langtry's social-cum-theatrical success in 1882 which set up a spirit of emulation among society women who tried their luck on the stage, often with lamentable results. The term connoted incompetence and was even used by dramatic critics and journalists. J. Redding Ware, in *Passing English of the Victorian Era*, quotes from *Entr'acte*, 1883: 'Acting ladies, in my opinion, should be severely left alone. There is no pleasing them or their friends.' (Lily Langtry, 1852-1929, was known as The Jersey Lily and appeared under her own management in London and New York where she was very successful and popular.)

**acting manager.** The business manager 'in front of the house' who *acts* in the interests of the theatre management and has complete control of everything on the auditorium side of the curtain, as well as being responsible for the well-being of the company acting in the theatre. He pays the artistes and staff, supervises the affairs of the box office, acts as host to the guests and patrons of the house. If with a touring company he works in liaison with the resident manager of the visited theatre. He also makes the travelling arrangements from town to town, and organizes the advance publicity and programme matter. He is known colloquially as the FRONT OF THE HOUSE MANAGER.

**acting play.** One providing plenty of scope for dramatics. The reverse of a LITERARY PLAY which depends upon the effective delivery of lines for its success.

**acting time.** See RUNNING TIME.

**action of a play.** The speeches, movements, and stage business. Cf. BUSINESS OF THE STAGE, THE.

**actor.** A performer on the stage. The term has its origin in the Latin verb, *agere*, to do, act, and is strictly applicable to players on the LEGITIMATE STAGE rather than to those in music halls, who are usually called artistes.

**actor laddy.** An actor of the Victorian school of melodrama. He used to wear flamboyant clothes and address his fellow actors as 'laddy'.

**actor manager.** A leading player who rents a theatre and runs his own company. Also one who tours a repertoire of plays under his own management, playing the leading rôles himself. Cf. GUVNOR, THE.

**actor-proof.** A part so written, and with such brilliant lines, or business, that any player would succeed in its portrayal.

**actor's bible, the.** This term was first applied to the stage newspaper, *The Era*, in the 1870's, but now refers to *The Stage*, a weekly publication that superseded it.

**actor's church, the.** The church of St Paul, Covent Garden, London. The present Vicar used to be on the stage.

**A.C.U.** Short for Actor's Church Union.

**actors died with Irving!** A catchphrase directed against a 'cocky' beginner by an old actor. Now obsolescent, if not obsolete. Sir Henry Irving, 1838-1905, was the first actor to be knighted and so freed the profession from the stigma 'rogues and vagabonds'.

**actor's preparation.** The studying of his part in relation to the play as a whole. His plan of portrayal and general 'feel' of the character.

**actress.** A 'female actor'. In Shakespeare's day there were no women players, all female parts being acted by young men or boys, and it was not until the Restoration period that women began to appear in the theatre, though there is a record of the Italian Isabella Andreini (1567-1604) as professional actress, and on the French stage women had made their appearance. In England, however, it was in 1660 that the first actress made her début in the part of Desdemona in *Othello*.

**actresses will happen in the best regulated families!** The philosophical catch-phrase used when a scion of the nobility falls in love with one. A parody on 'accidents will happen in the best regulated families!' The phrase was coined at the time when Gaiety girls were marrying into the peerage.

**adagio.** Slow movements in stage dancing. The *grand adagio* is 'the emotional climax of the traditional classic repertory in a ballet performed by soloists as a stylized love-duet, ornamented by brilliant turns, held poses, lifts, and footwork, in which the cavalier effaces himself to display the grace and technique of his

## **adaptation**

lady.' (Lincoln Kirstein, of the American Ballet Caravan, New York.)

**adaptation.** A play that has been taken from a novel or one that has been adapted to suit a different audience from that to which it has played during its metropolitan run. A foreign play translated and adapted for the English theatre.

**additive lighting.** The primary colours of light are the monochromatic red, green, and blue. By suitable mixing of these hues any colour can be produced on the stage. Thus: red plus green plus blue will produce white light; red plus green produces yellow; blue plus green produces peacock-blue; red plus half-green produces orange; blue plus half-red produces cerise; and so on. There is an excellent chapter on colour mixing in *The Technique of Stage Lighting*, by R. Gillespie Williams. (Pitman, London.)

**Adelphi drama.** Plays acted in the tradition associated with the old Adelphi Theatre, London. This house was noted for the 'meatiness' of its fare and the amplitude of the actors' performances. Hence any acting technique savouring of melodrama is dubbed *Adelphi*, though the term is seldom heard today. The Adelphi's motto was 'good plays and fine acting' and the audiences certainly had their money's worth. Among the many dramas that toured the provinces for years were: *The Colleen Bawn*, *The Octoroon*, *The Worst Woman in London*, *The Face at the Window*, and that great play *The Harbour Lights* which starred William Terriss, the 'heart-throb' of that period. Terriss was a firm favourite with playgoers, rivalling Lewis Waller—who inspired the famous K.O.W. (Keen on Waller) Club—and all London was shocked when Terriss was murdered at the stage-door of the Adelphi Theatre by a jealous and megalomaniac 'super' who had borne him an unjustified grudge. The ghost of Bill Terriss (as he was affectionately called by his fellow players) is said to haunt the narrow passage between the Strand and Maiden Lane where the stage-door of the theatre was situated. The Adelphi was redesigned some years ago.

**ad lib.** To continue to 'gag' or improvise and so 'fill in' when an artiste has missed an entrance cue and there is a STAGE WAIT. Cf. PONG.

**admission.** Short for free-admission, or complimentary tickets (United States theatrical usage). Cf. COURTESY OF THE HOUSE; COMPLIMENTARIES; DEAD-HEADS; BILL POST PASS; ON ONE'S WILK.

**advance.** The number of seats booked in advance of a performance, or the money matured at the box-office.

**advance manager.** An official who travels ahead of a touring company, arranging local publicity, etc.

**advance notice.** The posters, newspaper publicity, lantern slides, etc., that precede a play's visit to the local theatre.

**agent.** A theatrical agent who acts on behalf of theatres or artistes. He books plays, librettos, songs, sketches, etc., and obtains engagements for players. He receives a percentage payment for his services.

**agents, do the.** To 'go the rounds' in the agency district in search of work.

**agent's ten per cent.** The amount payable by one for whom the agent has obtained an engagement. Ten per cent of the artiste's salary as commission.

**air.** To broadcast a play, or excerpts of one, on the radio. 'We are being *aired* on Wednesday so there will be a rehearsal call on Tuesday morning to run through the scenes for cuts.' See **CUT**, and **RUN THROUGH**.

**air-man chair.** A jocular transposition of chairman (music hall term now obsolete).

**aisle, centre.** The centre gangway in the auditorium. From the French *aile*, a wing (of a church). The present-day spelling was, according to Ernest Weekley, the common form in France during the sixteenth century.

**aisles, I had 'em in the.** A comedian's boast that his gags so reduced the audience to helplessness through laughter that the people at the end seats fell into the aisles. Cf. **NOT A DRY SEAT IN THE HOUSE**.

**Aldwych farces.** The immensely successful farcical comedies by Ben Travers which starred that unsurpassed team, Ralph Lynn, Tom Walls, and Robertson Hare. The plays: *A Cuckoo in the Nest*, *It Pays to Advertise*, *Tons of Money*, and *Thark* packed the Aldwych Theatre in the 1920's.

**al fresco.** An entertainment in the open air. An open air theatre like that in Regent's Park, London, or in Scarborough's Peasholme Lake, where *al fresco* performances of Shakespeare, and opera are presented. *Al fresco* concert parties are very popular in seaside towns and city parks during the summer months. From the Italian *al fresco*, in the fresh (air). Cf. **PASTORAL TOUR**.

**a little less off and a little more on!**

**a little less off and a little more on!** A sarcastic injunction addressed to a 'dressing-room' star who is full of facetiousness and arrogance, but has no marked talent to justify the attitude.

**all Broadway cast.** This means as much, or a little, as FULL WEST END CAST, q.v.

**all in.** The full-board tariff in theatrical lodgings. 'Are you catering for yourself or do you want *all in terms*' (Theatrical landlady's colloquial). Cf. CATER FOR ONESELF.

**allongé.** An elongated line in an ARABESQUE (Ballet).

**all-round actor.** A versatile artiste who can be trusted with any type of 'responsible' part.

**all star cast.** The (frequently mendacious) billing by a touring management of a metropolitan success. Occasionally a West End cast tours the principal cities, but it is either a preliminary run to London production, or a short tour following the play's withdrawal from the theatre where it has had a long run.

**alphabet.** It is an old theatrical saying that any actor worth his salt could earn a ROUND (of applause) by reciting the alphabet.

**also rans.** The 'tail' in the cast of a play. From the sporting paper's reports on race meetings: 'Also ran, So and So, etc.' See TAIL.

**alto.** The lowest voice in boys and women (contralto). Men who sing alto today do so with a trained head voice (falsetto). The compass of the true alto lies within two octaves, from the lowest A of the treble stave to the E or F.

**altogether, please!** An invitation to the audience to join in the chorus of a music hall song. There is at least one *altogether, please!* in a Christmas pantomime or in a seaside concert party.

**amphitheatre.** The upper circle or lower gallery. Originally the Roman theatre used an amphitheatre for gladiator fights and the like (Greek *amphi*, around). Seats set round an arena. Cf. theatre in the round.

**anachronism.** A chronological error. The representing as co-existent something that could not possibly be. Out-of-character scenery, decoration or the use of modern idioms of speech in a period play. A *locus classicus* is in *Julius Caesar*, Act II, scene I, where Cassius announces that, 'The clock has stricken three!' Of course, there were no clocks in Cæsar's time. The inadvertent wearing of a wrist-watch in, say, Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, would provide an *anachronism*, as would the expression 'You're telling me!' in a Victorian play. The word is compounded of the

Greek *ana*, backwards, and *kronos*, time. Cf. PROCHRONISM, and PARACHRONISM.

**angel.** v. To finance a play, or a player. 'Unless somebody can be found to *angel* this show it will have to come off.' Perhaps from guardian angel? (2) n. One who backs a play.

**appear in a play.** To act in one or even stand on the stage as a SUPERNUMERARY.

**apprentice school.** Any reputable school of acting. For example, the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art.

**apron, the.** A much-reduced version of the apron on the Elizabethan stage which used to extend well into the auditorium and round which part of the audience sat or stood. Today the *apron* is the space between the SETTING LINE (q.v.) and the footlights. At the Shakespearean Festival in the Memorial Theatre at Stratford-on-Avon there was a reproduction of the Elizabethan *apron* stage. Cf. BLACK.

**aqua show.** A seasonal entertainment that has become popular in recent years. Aquatic turns are performed in tanks on the stage or in suitable settings according to the size of the theatre. Latin *aqua*, water.

**arabesque.** A posture of the body on one leg with the other stretched out behind, one arm in front, the other behind. It is an extremely graceful pose in ballet.

**architrave.** The technical term for the moulding round windows, doors, etc., in stage scenery.

**arena show.** An open air performance in an auditorium capable of holding 10,000 people or more. See AUDITORIUM (2).

**argentine.** Material used to give the effect of glass in stage windows; imitation silver. From the Latin *argentum*, silver.

**aria.** An air, or song, in grand opera, or in an oratorio. Pronounced *Ahria*. (Italian.)

**arioso.** A short aria that is part of the melody ending a recitative in opera. An Italian diminutive of the preceding.

**aristocratic parts.** In the days when romantic drama was at its zenith the cast resembled a page from *Debrett* or *Burke's Landed Gentry*; dukes, lords, viscounts were the rule rather than the exception, and stage newspaper advertisements insisted that artistes should be 'capable of playing aristocratic parts'. Cf. MUST SPEAK THE KING'S ENGLISH.

**arrange (music).** To adapt a score for incidental music or otherwise

## Art Theatre

prepare it for the orchestra. 'Musical interlude *arranged* by So and So' is a frequent notation on theatre programmes.

**Art Theatre.** Where plays are produced for 'art's sake' on a non-profit-making principle. In the United States the term applies to amateur dramatics.

**articulation.** The art of speaking clearly in a theatre. Correct breathing and control of the tongue are essential to an artiste if he is to reach the ears of those in the back seats of the house. Under *articulation* come modulation, intonation, inflection, and the all-important art of pitch. Inaudibility is a theatre sin that cannot be too severely deprecated.

**artificial comedy.** See COMEDY OF MANNERS.

**artistes.** The generic term, in contracts, for actors and actresses. 'Wanted *artistes*, all lines, for Repertory season, play as cast, etc.' (Advertisements in stage newspapers, *passim*.)

**artistic failure.** A play that misfires and is damned by all the critics.

**artistic success.** An æsthetically pleasing play which is praised by the critics but fails to make money. It is too 'highbrow' for the general public.

**Arts Theatre.** The Arts Theatre Club and theatre, 6 Great Newport Street, London, W.C.2. Members of the profession foregather for meals and conversation. Plays are regularly produced at the highest West End level.

**ascension, make an.** To forget one's lines. They 'fly' out of one's head. Cf. BALLOON, DRY-UP, PONG, and STICK.

**ashcan.** A compartment-type footlight unit (Cinema influence).

**aside.** A *sotto voce* remark for the benefit of the audience and, supposedly, inaudible to the rest of the cast on the stage. Stage villains in old-fashioned melodrama were much given to *asides*. E.g.; 'She little knows what's in store for her if she doesn't yield to my wishes.'

**A.S.M.** The Assistant Stage Manager. A euphemism for 'general stooge'. The job is usually carried out by a stage beginner who combines his minor functions with that of small-part actor. *A.S.M.* is a thankless task bringing little of the glory implicit in the title, but this form of stage apprenticeship has to be endured and is extremely valuable training, especially in a repertory company. If a youngster is keen and observant he can learn much about the elements of his profession. When in the prompt corner,

## Augustus Druriolanus

whether he is 'holding the book' or merely 'standing by', he is able to watch the principals and so learn the importance of pace, timing, the judicious pause, and other technicalities of the actor's art. Moreover, the constant changing of scenery and lighting in the productions will instruct him in stagecraft and in stage management. Most stage managers, having gone through the mill themselves, are indulgent and make allowances for beginners. Today many *A.S.M.*'s are women, who have an instinctive sense of stage decoration (in the technical sense) and are very conscientious in their work. They are excellent prompters and far more reliable than males in this respect. In the absence of a call boy the *A.S.M.* calls the artistes.

**à terre.** On the ground (of a ballet-dancer's foot).

**athletic droll.** See KNOCK-ABOUT COMEDIAN.

**at liberty.** The American version of RESTING. It sounds nicer than 'out of work'.

**atmosphere.** The pervading influence in a play.

**at rise.** The position of the artistes *at* the *rise* of the stage curtain on any act or scene. '*At rise*, Mary is seated at desk (R.C.) writing a letter.' Cf. DISCOVERED.

**attitude.** That adopted at the finish of a pirouette (ballet).

**attraction.** An entertainment that draws the business. Hence, BOX-OFFICE ATTRACTION.

**audience.** The assembled 'house', or hearers in a theatre.

**audience-proof.** A play whose success is a foregone conclusion. One that is also ACTOR-PROOF.

**audition.** A hearing of the voices of applicants for parts, or for the chorus of a musical play or an opera. It is also applied to the legitimate stage when judging the reading of parts.

**auditorium.** The seating accommodation in a theatre or concert hall. Boxes, stalls, pit-stalls on the ground floor; dress, and upper circles, and gallery upstairs. (2) A large area with a concreted floor, and with seating accommodation for some 5,000 people (United States). The Sadler's Wells Ballet Company, during their recent visit to America, performed at some of these *auditoriums*.

**auditory.** A place for hearers. An AUDITORIUM (2) An audience.

**Audley, John.** See JOHN AUDLEY.

**Augustus Druriolanus.** One of the nicknames of the late Sir Augustus Harris, one-time manager of the Drury Lane Theatre. Cf. DRURIOLANUS and EMPEROR AUGUSTUS.

## Aunt, the

**Aunt, the.** Short for the evergreen farce *Charley's Aunt*, first produced during Queen Victoria's reign and 'still running' at Christmas time.

**author! author!** The first night call for the author's appearance on the stage when a play has gone well.

**autumn tour.** From late September, or early October, until Christmas. cf. **SPRING TOUR**, and **SUMMER TOUR**.

**aviary.** The chorus girls' dressing-room. 'Bird' is the slang term for a girl (stage manager's colloquial).

## B

**back.** To support (finance) a production.

**back batten.** Is also known as a 'sky batten', and it lights the back-cloth only, not the acting area on the stage. See **BATTEN**.

**back-cloth.** The drop-scene at the back of the setting. It may represent a garden, a street scene, or merely be a plain sky-cloth.

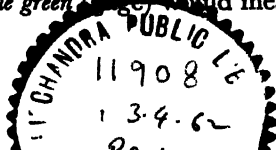
**back-cloth star.** A subsidiary actor whose position on the stage is near the back-cloth, but who tries to draw attention to himself by the use of by-play in an attempt to create a **CAMEO**.

**backer.** One who finances a play. Cf. **ANGEL**.

**background music.** Is a survival of the days of melodrama when music was played throughout the tense scenes. The more restrained music of today is played during quiet, sentimental scenes and is more effective in screen plays.

**backing.** A piece of scenery, painted in consonance with the setting, is placed behind a door, window, fire-place, or a garden space. A hall backing, for instance, has a bench or hallstand in front of it to give 'verisimilitude'. Window backings are often part of the general back-cloth picture of the landscape. It is very important that backings are adequately lighted. (2) Financial support.

**back of the green.** Behind the scenes. J. Redding Ware, in his delightful *Passing English*, suggests the off-rhyming of 'green' with 'scenes', and refers to a traditional green curtain. Pure rhyming slang would, one feels, reject 'scenes' and rhyme 'green (gage)' with 'stage': thus *back of the green (gage)* would mean back of the stage. See entry at **GREEN**.



## **bad dress rehearsal**

**back row of the chorus, she came from the.** Said of an actress who has risen the hard way, from the smallest beginnings. The *back row of the chorus* being the amoeba of the musical comedy stage.

**backstage.** Anywhere behind the curtain, though the term more specifically refers to the dressing-rooms where artistes receive their friends after the performance, or between the acts.

**backstage cover.** An insurance 'cover' provided by the British Actors' Equity. It compensates artistes for the loss of, or damage to, luggage or general effects, stage wardrobe, etc., at any place where they are performing, or in transit between such places. 'Compensation is provided up to £25 in any one year, but each and every loss carries an excess of £3 and is subject to deductions in respect of wear and tear.' The advantage of this cover scheme is that it applies to all places where Equity members work and not only to theatres.

**back-stage gossip.** Theatrical 'shop' in dressing-rooms, or clubs. Cf. GREEN-ROOM GOSSIP.

**back-stage influence.** Implies nepotism or a 'friend at court'. 'Knowing someone who knows someone,' etc. Said enviously of an artiste who has obtained an engagement in a West End production.

**back-stage staff.** All workers whose duties are carried out behind the curtain, e.g. stage-carpenters, electricians, property-men, stage-hands, flymen, firemen. Also the artistes' dressers, and, of course, that important functionary, the STAGE-DOOR KEEPER.

**bad.** Is used in reference to faulty technique. 'I don't like that cross above the settee, it looks *bad*.' 'Producers').

**Baddeley Cake.** Each year at the Drury Lane Theatre a cake is cut with great ceremony on the stage and eaten by members of the company appearing there. An actor of that name, a former cook, made the cake on a certain date every year and when he died in 1794 he left the interest on £100 to provide the *Baddeley cake* for his successors but he did *not* leave the recipe. This pleasing custom of eating the cake has been carried out ever since, and the ceremony is always reported in the press with a picture of the leading player in the act of cutting the cake.

**bad dress rehearsal means a good opening, a.** An old theatrical proverb that is often true, though the converse holds equally good: a good dress rehearsal being sometimes followed by a bad opening. A good opening performance is no guarantee that the

## **bad join**

second night will not see the artistes **FLUFF** or even **DRY UP**. Stuart Palmer uses the proverb as an epigraph in the first chapter of his detective novel *Four Lost Ladies*, 1950, and undernotes it 'a Broadway proverb'.

**bad join**. When two flats do not cleat together closely enough they show the backing light through the *bad join*, or gap, in the wooden frames. (2) The front of a wig that is not properly painted into the facial make-up.

**baffle**. Any suitable sheet of material used to prevent a spill of light where not necessary.

**bag**. To loop up a cloth border. Cf. **CLEW**.

**baggage man**. Is in charge of a theatrical company's property baskets, personal trunks and what not, and occasionally appears on the stage in a one-line part or as a supernumerary. In a touring company he helps on the stage with the properties, or furniture, during an act change.

**balcony**. Originally called the *balconey* (from the Italian *balcone*, a scaffold), is the tier of seats above the dress circle and below the gallery. It is known as the upper circle in some theatres; in others it is a superior term for the gallery.

**balcony front spot**. A spotlight lantern mounted in a cage in front of the balcony.

**ballabile or ballabili**. A finale in ballet when the assembled *corps* moves symmetrically on the stage to end in a tableau. From the Italian.

**ballad opera**. Was very much the rage in England during the eighteenth century. The opera was 'built' round popular airs. Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* is a perfect example of a *ballad opera*.

**ballerina** (plural *ballerinas* or *ballerine*). A female ballet-dancer (Italian diminutive).

**ballet**. A combination of music, mime, and **CHOREOGRAPHY**, q.v.

**ballet blanc**. A filmy white ballet skirt. Cf. **TUTU**.

**ballet master**. See **MAÎTRE DE BALLET**.

**ballet mistress**. She is in charge of the *corps de ballet* and responsible for their preparedness for the stage and for their general welfare.

**balletomania**. A term believed to have been coined by Arnold L. Haskell, an authoritative writer on the ballet and the founder of the Vic-Wells Ballet School in London. The word means 'ballet-fever' and refers to those never-miss-a-performance enthusiasts known as *balletomaniacs* or *balletomanes*.

**balloon.** To forget one's lines (American). Cf. ASCENSION, and CORPSE.

**balloon tyre.** A bag under an actor's eyes.

**balsa wood.** A very light wood used in the making of those properties which have to be used as weapons, so that the recipient of a blow is unhurt.

**band.** The orchestra. Hence *band call*, an orchestra rehearsal.

**band parts.** A catch-phrase employed when a particularly good story has been told or a witty gag has been inserted at rehearsal. 'That's pretty good; I'd like to have the *band parts*.' Cf. TOURING RIGHTS.

**band-room.** The orchestra rest-room, adjacent to the orchestra pit. It is situated under the stage.

**bankroller.** A very popular actor or actress. A box office attraction who brings in the banknotes (American).

**bar bells.** Are sounded in front of the house bars to warn patrons that the rise of the curtain is imminent.

**Bard, the.** William Shakespeare.

**Bard specialist.** An authority on anything Shakespearean (American).

**Bare-stall family, the.** Empty seats (stalls). A jocular, or a rueful, reference to a poor 'house'. Cf. WOOD FAMILY, THE, and PLUSH FAMILY, THE.

**barnacles.** Those hangers round the stage doors of music halls who hope to 'get off' with chorus girls as they leave the theatre. (2) Men seeking jobs as supers in big productions, or unemployed stage-workers hoping to get work.

**barnstormer.** A 'ham' actor. One who used to perform with a touring company that rented barns and raved (stormed) therein to a rustic audience. Cf. HAM.

**barrack.** To deride; jeer; boo, etc. This method of showing disapproval is far less prevalent today than in the Victorian era when plays received severe criticism when they fell short of an audience's expectations or were downright bad. The term, originally used on the cricket fields of Australia, perhaps from the Australian word *borak*, meaning derision.

**barré.** The steadying rail round the walls of a ballet-dancing studio to help pupils to balance.

**barrel.** A tube-like batten for holding spotlight lanterns. Cf. SPOT BARREL.

## **Basil-dress**

**Basil-dress.** The uniform worn by members of the British Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA for short)—of which Sir *Basil* Dean was head. The term near-rhymes with battle-dress, and the uniform was not unlike that worn by soldiers. Cf. ENSATAINMENT.

**baskets are in, the.** A catch-phrase used when there is a 'full house' in a provincial theatre. At the turn of the century many touring companies were stranded through lack of local support, so that, in order to settle their account with the theatre management, the property baskets had to be left behind as security. Cf. TRAVEL ON ONE'S PROPS.

**bass.** The lowest male singing voice, which has a compass of from F to F two octaves above, though some very deep basses exceed this limit.

**basso-buffo.** The bass who plays the comic part in opera.

**basso-cantante.** The singing bass who possesses a higher register than a basso-profondo.

**basso-profondo.** The lowest register of a deep bass. Cf. BASSO-CANTANTE.

**bat.** The harlequin's wand used in the old-fashioned HARLEQUINADE.

**Bath Assembly.** A festival of music and drama held in March each year under the auspices of the Glyndebourne Society. It is an echo of the assemblies in this gracious city during Beau Nash's time when Bath was the centre of elegance and gaiety.

**bathos.** An unintentional anti-climax which often occurs in sentimental, or music hall, songs, or in poorly constructed dramas. 'From the sublime to the ridiculous.' The first use of the word in this sense was in Alexander Pope's parody of Longinus' essay *On the Sublime*. The Greek meaning is depth.

**batten.** A steel or wooden bar which supports lighting equipment, cloths, borders, French flats, ceilings, etc. Cf. BARREL.

**batten out.** To stretch canvas on battens. The stage carpenter's job on Monday mornings in a touring production.

**battens, Number 1, 2, 3, 4.** The lighting battens with their compartments containing lamps, filters for colour media (cf. mediums), and reflectors. No. 1 is the batten nearest the proscenium opening, Nos. 2, 3 and 4 are equi-distant, the last being used to light the back-cloth or CYCLORAMA.

**batten, spot.** See SPOT BATTEN.

## beef and liberty!

**Bay.** A nickname shortening of Henry Baynton, whose Shakespearean Company was the forcing ground of talent. An Old Bensonian, Bay had an excellent team and his standard of production was extremely high. The yearly season at the Savoy Theatre, London, was a theatrical event, seats being sold out at every performance. Henry Baynton was a brilliant Hamlet, a part he played many times. He also revived *The Bells*, a melodrama in which Sir Henry Irving starred at the Lyceum in the rôle of Mathias. The atmosphere of the Baynton Company was much the same as that of Sir Frank Benson's and the two have been classed as the Oxford and Cambridge of the stage, from the large sprinkling of graduates in both companies. The film stars Robert Donat and Eric Portman learnt their business in Shakespearean repertory. After losing a fortune in the presentation of Shakespeare, Henry Baynton virtually retired from the stage in the 1900's.

**bay.** A space between the stacks of flats in a scene dock. Scenery is packed between scaffolding poles.

**Bayreuth.** The town in Bavaria, Germany, where, at the Wagner *Festspielhaus*, an opera festival is held yearly.

**Bayreuth hush.** The stillness, following the conductor's joining his orchestra in the Wagner opera house. This admirable custom of observing silence could be adopted with advantage in some English theatres. Cf. GLYNDEBOURNE SILENCE.

**beam angle.** The angle of a spotlight *beam* in relation to the stage lighting plot.

**beam borders.** Used for Tudor settings to represent oak beams.

**Beau Brummell type.** A stage 'exquisite'. One who excels in costume comedy. Beau Brummell (1778-1840) was a friend of the Prince Regent. He was wealthy, witty and the *arbiter elegantiarum* at the Bath Assemblies. He over-spent his fortune and escaped his creditors by fleeing to France. He died in poverty.

**bedroom and a sitting-room.** As opposed to a COMBINED-ROOM, connote success in the provincial theatre. The artiste receives enough salary to justify the expense. Cf. COMBINED-CHAT.

**beef and liberty!** The motto of the famous Beef Steak Club in Irving Street, London, W.C.2., which was started by the comedian, Richard Estcourt, circa 1700, when he was made the first Provider. Many front-rank players, literary men and artists are members.

## **before the lights**

**before the lights.** In front of the FOOTLIGHTS in a theatre; that is, performing on the stage.

**beginner.** A stage apprentice, a term applied to anyone with less than three years' acting experience.

**beginner's play.** One written by an author in his novitiate as a playwright.

**behind.** Short for 'behind the curtain', on the stage itself, shielded from the gaze of the audience. Cf. BACKSTAGE.

**ben, a.** Short for:

**benefit night (or performance).** One given for the benefit of a particular artiste, who receives the proceeds. Such performances are customary in concert parties at the end of a summer season at a seaside resort. Cf. the American COMPLIMENTARY.

**Bensonian.** A member or ex-member of Sir Frank Benson's Shakespearean Company. See PA.

**Bensonian window.** A window in the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford-on-Avon, dedicated to the memory of the late Sir Frank Benson and members of his famous companies who appeared at this theatre, which was founded by Sir Frank. He produced at the early festivals.

**'berry.** Aphetic for RASPBERRY q.v.

**bespeak performance.** Sir St Vincent Troubridge has kindly communicated the following definition. 'A *bespeak* was when a local notability (peer, mayor, colonel of regiment etc.), patronized a provincial theatre by *bespeaking* or commanding a particular play, visiting it with all his friends and also giving *the manager* a donation of from five to twenty guineas.'

**between the acts.** The entr'acts. It is a theatrical expression, seldom used by laymen, to denote the ten or fifteen minutes 'rest' between the acts of a play, or in the long interval in a musical comedy. 'Come round and see me *between the acts*'; 'Let's go over the new lines *between the acts*.'

**biank.** A shilling. From the Italian *bianco*, white. The term is a Parlyaree survival of the days when booth-theatres were common on fair grounds. See CAROON and compare the Cockney slang 'brown', a penny.

**big name.** A star whose name guarantees good business. For example, the late Ivor Novello, whose romantic musical comedies earned him a fortune, and many artistes their own 'names'. Cf. BIGGY.

**biggy.** A big-name. A top ranking stage or film star, or one who is TOP OF THE BILL in vaudeville (American).

**bijou theatre.** A little theatre where everything is done on a small scale. Plays are produced 'in curtains', or symbolic settings. A theatre holding about 500 people.

**bilk the landlady.** To leave without settling her account. To cheat, as in the card game cribbage, where to 'balk' (of which *bilk* is a thinning) is to spoil one's opponent's score. Cf. SCARPER.

**bill, the.** The programme in a vaudeville theatre. (2) A playbill, hence *billing*, the advertising matter.

**bill-board.** A hoarding in the vicinity of a theatre upon which the 'six sheets', or larger bills, are posted. Hence *bill board pass*, the free ticket issued to tradespeople who allow advertising matter to be pasted on their walls, or show small bills in their premises.

**bill-inspector.** The man responsible for theatre billing. He is in charge of the posters and distributes the requisite number to the bill-stickers who cover the billing districts. Day bills for display in hotels, public houses, and shop windows; 'throw-aways' (hand-bills), etc., all come within the *bill-inspector's* orbit. Cf. PUBLICITY AGENT.

**bill, on the same.** In the same programme at a variety theatre. 'Danny Kaye and I were *on the same bill* at the Palladium.'

**bill, out of the.** Said of a variety artiste who has suddenly left the programme.

**bill, top of the.** A star vaudeville artiste heading the programme. His name eclipses the rest. 'I see Bob Hope is *top of the bill* at the Vaudeville this week.'

**billy.** A single block and tackle 'used for hoisting scenery. Adopted from the nautical *handy-billy*, and probably so-named by an ex-seaman stage-hand, or flyman, a job that attracts many sailors accustomed to marline-spike work with ropes and pulleys.

**bio-box.** The projector-room, at the back of the auditorium. It is used to house the projector that shows the advertising slides on the screen placed in the proscenium arch during the interval, or before the curtain rises. The *biograph*, or early magic-lantern, was the precursor of the cinematograph.

**bird, the.** A demonstration of disapproval from the audience. Hisses, boos, cat-calls, slow clapping, the RASPBERRY (q.v.) and other—sometimes tangible—reminders have been known to stop a performance when it has been rank bad. The hissing suggests geese, hence *bird*. See GOOSE, LINNET and SHRIEKING OSTRICH.

## **Birmingham screwdriver**

**Birmingham screwdriver.** A hammer. From the habit of lazy workmen who hammer a screw into wood, then finish off with the last few turns of the screwdriver (a stage carpenter's term).

**bis!** A variant of 'encore'—which, be it noted, is seldom used in France. Instead *bis!* (Latin for 'twice') is there the usual cry of approbation. Cf. 'CORE.

**Bishop of Broadway, the.** The veteran actor, Harry Irvine who, born in England, went to America in 1915. He played many ecclesiastical rôles on the New York stage.

**bit part.** A very small part; 'two lines and a spit'. What used to be known in the Victorian theatre as a 'the carriage waits, me Lord', part. A stage chestnut is the story of the player of butler-parts who announced: 'My Lady, a gentleman stands without!' 'Without what?' asked the leading lady.

**bits.** Isolated scraps of dialogue gone over at rehearsals. 'There will be a call tomorrow at eleven-thirty to go over *bits*.'

**bite cues.** To cut in on a fellow artiste's lines, or to understress a cue-line, thus spoiling the other's next line, which would be unintelligible to those in the audience who missed the *cue-biter's* speech.

**biz.** Short for BUSINESS.

**black.** The apron in front of the stage is usually painted black. 'He addressed the audience from the *black*', that is, from the edge of the footlights.

**black-and-white artist.** A music hall entertainer specializing in swiftly executed caricature drawings in black crayon on a white board, or in white on a blackboard.

**blackface comedy.** See NIGGER MINSTRELS.

**black light.** Ultra violet light (an electrician's term).

**black out.** The cue *black out* in a light plot means that every light on the stage is switched off. In revue a *black out* serves as a quick curtain to a sketch. It often cloaks the lowering of a front cloth for the next item, which may be some lively patter by the comedian whilst the next set is being erected behind the cloth. (2) To forget one's lines in a mental *black-out*.

**black-out curtain.** See the above entry.

**black turn.** A music hall act by the genuine or pseudo-coloured artistes.

**blacks.** Black velvet curtains, borders, and wings used in certain types of intimate revue,

**blanking paper.** Sheets of blue paper that are pasted over bills when a play has been withdrawn and the theatre is DARK, q.v. See DAY-BILL.

**blinders.** Such bright lights beside the proscenium arch as are focused on the auditorium, thus *blinding* the audience so that they cannot see a quick change of scenery on the blacked-out stage.

**blobby.** An electrician's adjective to describe any uneven lighting on the stage. The term is also used by producers, thus: 'Electrics, I don't like that *blobbiness* over the door; try another medium in the amber spot.'

**blood and thunder.** Lurid melodrama as presented to the sensation-loving audiences at the drama houses south of the Thames (on the Surrey side). There was much blood and thunder in these productions. Hence:

**blood tub.** A theatre showing such fare.

**blower.** An electrically-driven fan for removing a large volume of air. It is often utilized for wind effects in storm scenes.

**blue gags.** Salacious wisecracks; sexual allusions or situations. Material for the censor's *blue* pencil.

**blueology.** A jocular American term for the art of creating and presenting *blue* material in vaudeville, or revues. Lines rendered less offensive by subtle treatment. Cf. BLUE GAGS.

**board.** Short for the stage switchboard.

**board-light.** The lamp on the stage director's table, or the electrician's board by which the plots can be read.

**boards, the.** The stage, hence *on the boards*, in the profession. The wooden boards of the stage itself.

**boards, tread the.** To act a part on the stage. 'No better actor *trod the boards* than Henry!' (an old actor's pronouncement concerning the great Sir Henry Irving).

**boat truck.** A wheeled platform on which boats were built to 'sail' behind a SEA GROUND ROW. Used in the Gilbert & Sullivan opera *The Gondoliers*, the ballet *Swan Lake*, and in many stirring melodramas of the sea in the days of spectacular productions. The truck is used for a variety of purposes nowadays. Cf. BOGIE.

**bobby pins.** Grips used by actresses to keep their hair in place. From the use of these pins by *bobbysoxers*.

**bobbysoxers.** Teen-age fans who, armed with autograph albums, besiege stage-doors and generally make a nuisance of themselves.

## **bogie**

They wear bobby socks and are the American equivalent of London's GALLERY GIRLS.

**bogie.** Another name for the BOAT TRUCK. A north country dialect term of unknown origin, it may have entered the theatre vocabulary via the railway workers who refer to their hand-trucks (barrows) as *bogies*. Stage carpenters, loading scenery at station goods-yards, often borrow these bogies to lighten the labour of carrying heavy pieces of scenery and properties. This etymology-defying word is also applied to the four-wheeled under-carriage of a locomotive engine. There seems little doubt, therefore, that *bogie* is a railway adoption.

**bole.** A golden-brown pigment used by artistes to achieve a deep sunburn effect in tropical plays.

**bolt.** A measure of canvas for scenery.

**bombast.** Hyperbolic language on the stage. Grandeur speech than the situations warrant.

**bon bon.** A spotlight lantern that concentrates light on an artiste's face.

**boo.** To deride a scene, or a particular artiste (imitative). See BIRD.

**book and lyrics.** The *book* is the story and dialogue in a musical comedy or opera; the *lyrics* are the vocal numbers. Cf. LIBRETTO.

**book-flat.** A pair of hinged flats that look somewhat like a book standing on its base. See FRENCH-FLAT for detailed description.

**book-wing.** A double-flat hinged in the middle. It can stand by itself without bracing. It is used chiefly for masking purposes.

**booked up.** All seats reserved for a performance. Cf. SOLD OUT and HOUSE FULL.

**booking office.** A theatre-booking agency in the city. Patrons are able to book seats through the agency, which communicates with the theatre concerned.

**boom.** Is short for:

**boomerang.** A mounting for spot, or flood-lights which can be set one above the other to illuminate a backcloth or cyclorama.

*Booms*, as they are commonly known, are also used for side-lighting.

**booms, portable.** Self-explanatory.

**boot.** See SLOAT.

**born a gentleman; died an actor.** A traditional theatrical 'crack'.

A worse fate would be, some aver, 'born an actor; died a gentleman'.

**born in a property basket.** The boast of one who has been on the

stage since childhood. Born of a theatrical family . . . almost in the dressing-room, where the baskets are kept. See **SKIP**.

**bosh lines.** The violin strings used by puppet-show men for operating their marionettes. From *bosh*, a Romany term for a fiddle. Compare the American slang *boss*, a wire-puller.

**bos'un's chair.** In full, a boatswain's chair. A rope-suspended seat that can be hoisted to any desired height and is used by stagehands working away from the fly-platform, or at any height that cannot be reached by ladder. It is also known as a *bos'un's stool*.

**bottom lighting.** Footlights, ground rows, backing lights, cyclorama floodlights, etc., that are plotted to illuminate the lower part of the setting. Cf. **TOP LIGHTING**.

**Bourne, the.** The lake in the grounds of the Glyndebourne Festival Opera House, Mr John Christie's gracious theatre near Lewes, in the heart of the Sussex downland. Here the 'guests' (it seems indelicate to use the word 'patrons' in connection with this friendly place) stroll during the long (dinner) interval. *Bourne* is the southern English version of the Scottish *burn*, a stream.

**bow, take a.** To take a curtail call. Acknowledge the applause by *bowing* to the audience. An old theatrical convention.

**bow teller.** The stage manager who, able to hear the strength, or the weakness, of the applause from his prompt corner, *tells* the artistes when to take another call (*bow*).

**bowl.** The amphitheatre, especially an *al fresco* one like the Greek Theatre at Bradfield College where a play in the original Greek is given each year by the Collegians.

**Bowdlerization.** An expurgated version of a classical comedy (e.g., the *Lysistrata* of Aristophanes) or a Restoration play. Doctor Thomas Bowdler (1754-1825) published an edition of the works of Shakespeare 'in which words or expressions are omitted that cannot, with propriety, be read aloud in a family'. He also brought out an emasculated edition of Edward Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*; this started a fashion, during that squeamish period in English literary history, of 'family' versions of the classics. In the name of 'propriety' many unforgivable acts of bibliocide were committed, and it was not until fairly recently that books and plays were freed from the hands of Bowdlerizers, and franker translations of classical plays have appeared.

**box-office appeal.** The drawing power of a leading player. It is

## **box-office keeper**

commonly shortened to *box-office*. 'The new musical at the Palace is sure to have a run; Buchanan is *box-office* any time.'

**box-office keeper.** The official in charge of a theatre pay office in front of the house.

**box-office manager.** Is in charge of the main booking office in a theatre. He acts in telephonic liaison with the theatre ticket agencies and arranges his sheets accordingly. A clever box-office manager is a valuable asset to the management.

**box-office plan.** The seating plan of the bookable parts of the house. There is a separate sheet for each part of the auditorium.

**box-officially speaking.** '*Box-officially* this show is a wow, but artistically . . . well!' (adopted from American theatre usage, the term is fairly common in English theatres).

**box scene.** One made up of flats, forming the back and both sides, as opposed to an open set consisting of a back-cloth and wings.

**boys and girls.** The traditional informal address to a touring company by the stage manager: 'Now, *boys and girls*, you'll have to pep up that scene in Act II; it is dragging, and isn't going as well as it used to when we opened the tour.' In the Number 1 companies this mode of address has fallen into desuetude, and the more dignified 'ladies and gentlemen' is used.

**bravol! braval! bravi!** Acclamations at festivals of International opera. The Italian acclamation, respectively, for a male, a female singer and singers collectively.

**brail-line.** A length of thin cordage used to brail (haul up) something into position.

**break.** The holding up at rehearsal for, say, a homily by the producer, or for luncheon. (2) In tap dancing, a slight pause in the rhythm. (3) The American colloquial sense of 'fortune': 'So and So had a lucky *break* in that Broadway show last fall.'

**break into pictures.** To leave the stage for the more lucrative cinematic field.

**break-up.** A piece of scenery designed to collapse at cue; for instance in an earthquake scene in melodrama, or the collapse of a shelled or bombed building in a war play.

**breeches part.** A male rôle portrayed by a woman (obsolete).

**bridge.** Part of the stage that can be electrically or hydraulically raised or lowered. (2) A platform over the orchestra pit with steps into the auditorium. It is used by a producer at rehearsals and saves his constant use of the pass-door. Cf. LIGHT BRIDGE.

**bridle.** Two or more ropes or chains attached by a ring-eye, or shackle, to the end of a grid-line and fitted, at intervals, with clips, to a batten or a barrel, thus distributing a heavy load of lighting, battens, flown flats, etc.

**brief.** A complimentary ticket. A free pass to a performance. From the German *brief*, a letter or short note.

**bring in.** To switch on stage lighting that has been 'off' until the 'cue'. For instance, a stage may have been dim to indicate twilight. A maid enters, switches on the standard lamp, or main lighting, and the electricians will *bring in*, at cue, whatever lighting is on the plot. Cf. CHECK.

**bristle trap.** Has flaps of bristle or birch twigs through which an artiste may emerge slowly on to the stage. See TRAP.

**broad** (of technique). The MELODRAMATIC style of acting; a tendency to rant in dramatic scenes, or to overplay, or to clown, in comedy.

**broad comedy.** Slapstick, or farcical comedy played on crude lines with all the points laboured and 'comic bits' introduced for the sake of cheap laughs. A deliberate playing down to a simple audience on whom the subtler technique would be wasted.

**Broadway hit.** A New York success.

**Broadwayites.** Ardent playgoers who spend most evenings in Broadway theatres.

**brodie.** A theatrical failure. The term originates in one Steve Brodie who jumped, or failed to jump, from old Brooklyn Bridge. Thus to *do a brodie* is to attempt something that doesn't come off, hence its application to a play that FLOPS.

**brogue.** Dialect pronunciation, especially the Irish, used exaggeratedly on the stage.

**broken-down actor.** One of those pathetic figures around Poverty Corner in London or the New York equivalent. Unemployed and usually unemployable. Many of these men have done excellent work, but, for reasons best known to themselves, they have dropped out of the race, though often it is simply *anno domini*. The Cinema, however, forced many actors off the stage.

**broker's men.** The characters for two comedians in pantomime. Usually a well-known 'double-act' is engaged for the parts.

**bronchial.** A member of an audience whose constant coughing distracts the artistes. 'I could throttle that *bronchial* in the third row, he is a perfect menace.'

## Bronx cheer

**Bronx cheer.** The American version of RASPBERRY. It is believed to have originated in the Bronx district of New York north of Manhattan, from which it is separated by the Bronx River. The University of New York, Fordham University, and the famous Yankee Stadium are situated here. Hence the disapproving noises made at the sporting events in this locality.

**budger.** A comedian who can be relied upon to move (budge) a stubborn audience to responsiveness, or at least risibility (Vaudeville term).

**buffo** (feminine, **buffa**). The Italian for comic, burlesque, hence *Opera buffa*, comic opera. Compare the French *buffe*, echoic of a blow and suggestive of *slapstick* comedy technique.

**buffoonery.** Stage fooling, broad comedy business. From the French *bouffon*, a jester, from the verb *bouffer*, to puff (the cheeks). The term is cognate with the Italian *buffone*, from *buffa*, a joke, itself from the verb *buffare*, to blow out the cheeks, as does the jester in his facial grimaces.

**bug hole.** A variant of the more usual FLEA PIT, q.v.

**bull frog.** A deep-voiced melodrama actor. This original meaning has spread to any actor with such a voice. Like the croaking of a frog.

**bumper house.** A house-full performance. *Bumper* means anything large. From the brimming glass (bumper) of the roistering days when England was 'merry'.

**bunch lights.** A cluster of lights in a wing or any position needing extra illumination which cannot be provided by standard lighting.

**burg.** An American town, irrespective of size (American touring actors').

**buried in the provinces.** Playing a part in a touring company, or in resident repertory in a provincial town. Forgotten, if ever known, by London managements.

**burlesque.** A stage parody. A travesty of a play, or a 'take-off' caricature of a celebrity or of a fellow artiste. Any form of bathos introduced in a revue, or vaudeville act. From the French via Italian *burlesca*, from *burla*, a jest, mockery. Cf. COD VERSION.

**burlesque house.** A small vaudeville theatre where broad comedy is the staple fare.

**burlesqueries.** Theatres that specialize in burlesques and slapstick comedies (American).

**burletta.** A short burlesque, a skit. Italian *burla* and the diminutive *etta*. Dr Joseph T. Shipley says that the term is now used in America as a legal definition of a play with enough music to evade patent restrictions.

**burletterize.** To turn a comedy into a burlesque by broadening the business and altering the dialogue to obtain readier laughs when a play is presented to 'simple' audiences (obsolete).

**burnt cork artiste.** A 'white man' who acts as a nigger minstrel. He makes up his face with burnt cork.

**burnt sugar.** Is used by a property master to represent drinks on the stage. Mixed with water to the right colour burnt sugar can represent wines.

**bus.** So marked in the prompt copy and in an artiste's part, is like BIZ, short for BUSINESS—the actions to be carried out. It can mean anything from the casual lighting of a cigarette to the throttling of the villain.

**business of the stage, the.** Everything to do with actions carried out by artistes, as opposed to dialogue.

**busk.** To play a musical instrument, or sing, to a theatre queue, or outside a public house. From the old French verb, *busquer*, to seek one's fortune, it is cognate with the Italian *buscare*, to filch, prowl . . . with that end in view.

**busker.** A queue entertainer, whether as a performer on an instrument, a singer, acrobat, conjurer, or patter-artiste.

**buskin.** A high boot anciently worn by tragedians to give them height. *The buskin* is short for SOCK AND BUSKIN, q.v.

**butler part.** Any part of a male servant. 'Gentleman's gentleman', footman, and the like.

**butter and egg man.** One with no artistic pretensions who puts on 'shows' for the sake of financial gain. He might as well sell groceries.

**butterflies in the stomach.** Symptoms of first night nerves felt by all sensitive artistes—indeed, the better the artistes, the more prone are they to this truly dreadful, and dreaded, sensation. From the heavings and fluttering in the stomach whilst waiting for the cue to go on to the stage.

**buzzer.** Any bell cue, e.g. the curtain warning signal.

**by-play.** Business between two characters in a scene; mostly carried out in dumb show.

# C

**cab tyre.** Flexible wire cased in a rubber protective coat, insulated, and used for temporary installations, usually out of doors. It much resembles a cab tyre.

**cackle.** An old term for stage conversation, dialogue generally. Specifically, it refers to that unpunctuated flow of almost unintelligible patter from a comedian when covering a 'dry-up' or a missed entrance-cue by a fellow artiste. Ware, in his record of the term, quotes the *Stage* newspaper (the ACTOR'S BIBLE) of 1885, which defines *cackle* as: 'A convertible substantive or verb which carries a meaning for which it would be difficult to substitute any other word nearly as effective, and there is a world of satire in its application to a human goose.'

**cackle-thrower.** An assistant stage manager, or whoever acts as prompter. From the preceding (obsolete).

**cacology.** An elocution technicality for bad diction; solecistic pronunciation; indistinct articulation, or general infringement of the law of phonetics. From the Greek *kakos*, bad, and *logos*, word or speech.

**cacophony** (of music). Rauous; also applied to ill-timed execution by an orchestra or an instrumentalist, *kakos*, bad, plus *phone*, sound. Cf. CALLITHUMPIAN.

**cake girl.** A box office ticket-seller in an American theatre. She works behind a wire-fronted guichet. Also *ducat-hustler*.

**call.** In theatre parlance any notice is termed a call, the notice board being the *Call Board*. Thus are rehearsals *called*, not ordered. 'Don't forget there is a *call* for Act III tomorrow morning at 10.30 sharp.'; 'What time is the *band call* [orchestra rehearsal] on Monday?' (2) A *curtain call*, when the star or full company make their bows to the audience at the end of an act. In vaudeville, when an act has gone exceptionally well and the audience clamours for a repetition, the artiste or artistes *play a call* (tantamount to an ENCORE), which can be either a repeated performance of the act, or a different item. 'You can *play a call* tonight if they ask for it, but make it short.' The term *call* is peculiar to the theatre and may have been adopted from the nautical system of issuing orders by bos'un's call, or 'pipe', but it is more likely that it is merely a *calling-together* of the company.

**call board.** A theatre notice board.

**call book.** See next entry.

**call boy.** A lad who *calls* the acts, and individual artistes, during the running of the play. He stations himself beside the stage manager in the prompt corner and acts under his orders. His first *call* is half-an-hour before the Overture, when he calls: 'Half-an-hour, please!' Fifteen minutes later he calls 'Quarter-of-an-hour, please!' These warnings have the effect of hurrying the laggards, and discourage dressing-room gossip, as the precious minutes are flying. As soon as the orchestra leaves the band-room under the stage the boy calls 'Overture and Beginners, please!' which brings the artistes who 'open' the play on to the stage to take up the positions in which they will be 'discovered' at the rise of the curtain. Once the curtain is up, the boy calls 'Curtain up, please!' and thereafter warns artistes when he is told to do so by the stage manager. Successive acts will be called half-way through the intervals: 'Beginners Act II, please!'; and so on. In recent years 'call girls' have been introduced in some theatres. A **CALL BOOK** is used by the call boy when he has many calls to make and the approximate times of these are noted in his book. Many leading players began their careers in this capacity, for excellent opportunities are given to 'look and learn'.

**callithumpian.** An American adjective for any loud, discordant, 'jazzy' noise. Hence *callithumpian band*, a noisy dance orchestra. From the Greek *kallos*, beautiful, plus thump. (2) A member of a callithumpian band.

**call out.** To demand a curtain speech from the leading artiste at the end of a performance. He is *called out* of the setting to make his acknowledgments in front of the fallen curtain. The **TABS** are parted for him (American).

**call over.** The daily check of outside bookings which the box office manager makes with the theatre-ticket agencies and libraries. He marks the booked seats on his seating plans, the unbooked ones obviously being available for sale.

**call, train.** A *train call* is the time at which a touring company leaves one town for the next on the tour list. For the convenience of artistes the business manager gives the times of departure and arrival, and any changes to be made *en route*. This enables artistes to make arrangements for meals, etc.

**calls, pinch.** See **PINCH CALLS**.

## **calypso**

**calypso.** 'A ballad-like improvisation in African rhythm, often a satire on current events, composed and sung by the natives of Trinidad, B.W.I., at annual festivals' (*Webster's New International Dictionary*). Calypso singing has become increasingly popular in vaudeville and in radio shows.

**calypsonian.** A singer of CALYPSOS.

**cameo.** A character part so well portrayed that it stands out well above the other small parts. Very often such parts are ACTOR-PROOF and cannot fail to bring prominence to a player. It is not that the artiste obtrudes his personality, but that the lines, or business, in the part, or the situation in the play make the rôle particularly noticeable.

**campus theatre.** Amateur dramatics given in American Universities, Latin *campus*, a meadow, hence a college close or quadrangle.

**cancan.** A stage dance in revue or in cabaret. It originated in Paris about 1830, but went out of favour within a few years. The dance was revived. Its main features are the frill and the limb-revealing high-kick.

**canes.** Small canes inserted in a wooden disc revolved at varying speeds on an electric motor, which makes the sound of wind.  
(2) One *cane* in each hand smacked quickly and smartly on a leather cushion produces the effect of rifle, or machine-gun fire.

**canvas theatre.** A large marquee in which plays are presented at galas; e.g., the Festival Tent-Theatre at Pitlochry in Scotland.  
Cf. TENT THEATRE.

**carbons.** Rods of compressed carbon dust used for arc projectors. The rods, hand or electrically fed, burn away in incandescence.

**card, on one's.** Free admission to a theatre on presentation of an artiste's professional *card*. A traditional privilege, though less popular from a managerial point of view than formerly, owing to its abuse by many people on the fringe of, rather than in, the profession.

**caroon.** Parlyaree for a five-shilling piece, which it was considered unlucky to receive in a pay-envelope. The term may be directly from Romany (the Welsh variant is *kurune*) or the standard Italian *corona*, a crown. Eric Partridge suggests that if the Parlyaree and Romany terms do not corrupt *crown* they may derive, not from Italian, but from the old French *couronne* (*Essay on Parlyaree in Here, There, and Everywhere*).

**carp.** An American nickname, and vocative, for the stage *carpenter*.  
Cf. *CHIPS*.

**carpenter** (of scripts). To alter a play to suit different types of audience. Cf. *DOCTOR* and *ADAPTATION*.

**carpenter scene.** An obsolete term for a *front-cloth scene*. A duologue carried on while the carpenter and his men erect the next scene.

**carpenter, stage.** See *STAGE CARPENTER*.

**carpet-cut.** A hinged board running along the *SETTING-LINE*. It lifts to trap the down-stage edge of a carpet or a stage cloth, and keeps it in position.

**carpet-cut ring.** A brass ring inserted flush with the *CARPET-CUT* used for the purpose of lifting the cut.

**cast.** v. To assign parts to artistes. (2) The *DRAMATIS PERSONÆ*; the company of artistes.

**casting couch.** A jocular, if indelicate, reference to the setttee in a theatrical manager's or agent's office.

**casting director.** One who supplies the cast of a play or musical comedy.

**cast-iron comic.** A comedian whose 'gags' and business a *blasé* audience finds hard going. A laboured technique by an out-moded artiste.

**cast out of type.** To be given a part unsuitable to one's personality or physique. Such casting is inevitable in repertory companies where artistes' work has to be evenly distributed if undue strain is not to be imposed on 'types'.

**catch a cold.** To do a week's bad business in a provincial town. As a rule, there is some factitious reason for this, unless a piece is thoroughly bad. A play featuring, say, a train smash—like Arnold Ridley's *The Wrecker*—a successful London thriller of the 1920's—would *catch* a severe *cold* if playing in a town where such an accident had occurred, as actually happened with this particular play. The crash took place on the eve of the touring company's visit and, naturally, very poor business resulted. The catch-phrase probably originated in the days of *DRY-UP COMPANIES* when clothing was often left in a theatre in lieu of payment to save a company from being stranded.

**cat-calls.** Noises of disapproval.

**cat-walk.** A narrow bridge communicating with the two fly-galleries above and below the proscenium arch.

**cater for oneself.** Touring artistes either take apartments on the

## **catever**

**ALL IN** (i.e. full board) tariff, or cater for themselves. By the latter arrangement the landlady charges a fixed rate for 'rooms and attendance', which includes the cooking of any food brought in by her 'lets' (cf. **LETTO**), or she herself buys what her lodgers order and adds the cost to her bill at the week-end. Cf. **ALL IN**.

**catever**. Bad business (in the fit-up theatres). A Parlyaree corruption of the Italian *cattivo*, feminine *cattiva*, bad. Often *multy catever* (Italian *multo*, very; much). The term can be applied to any disastrous occurrence, e.g. the stranding of a company. Few fit-up companies remain on the road and the term is obsolete.

**catharsis**. The emotional relief caused by the witnessing of a tragedy. The reference is to Aristotle's *Poetics* (VI): 'Tragedy, then, is the imitation of an action . . . with incidents arousing pity (*eleos*) and fear (*phobos*) wherewith to accomplish its catharsis, or purgation, of such emotions.' (Bywater's translation.) Aristotle regarded pity and fear as forms of pain which could be purified (*kathairo*, to cleanse) through the realms of art. Literally, *catharsis* is a purgation in the medical sense. In the Aristotelian sense it is, as F. L. Lucas has pointed out in his admirable lecture on *Tragedy* (published as No. 2 of the Hogarth lectures), the human soul that is purged of its excessive passions, rather than the passions that are purged of their impurities.

**cavatina**. An operatic air that is shorter and simpler than an aria. The diminutive form of *cavata*, an air (Italian).

**ceiling-cloth**. A plain white cloth set above the flats of a chamber, or of any other interior settings. See also:

**ceiling-piece**. The same as a **CEILING-CLOTH**.

**celestials**. The occupants of the **GODS**; the gallery patrons.

**cellar**. The under-stage space. Often the band-room is situated here.

**C.E.M.A.** The short title of the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts.

**centage**. The English Telegraphic Code word for *per centage*, the amount decided between the lessee of a theatre and the company performing thereat.

**centre aisle**. See **AISLE**, **CENTRE**.

**centre line**. The line taken from the centre of the footlights to the middle of the back wall on the stage. It is used as a guide when setting the scenes. (2) The middle one of a **SET OF LINES**.

**centre opening**. The centre opening in a setting, e.g. French windows, double-doors and the like.

## **character, go out of**

**centre piece.** Scenery that is set in the middle of the stage.

**centre practice.** That part of a ballet class that has advanced beyond the *barre*.

**centre prompt-box.** A hooded-box situated under the apron. It is used more in grand opera and musicals than in general productions. A conductor follows the score throughout and prompts any singer who dries-up.

**centre stage.** The centre of the acting area. The focal point of the leading players, and so, jealously guarded.

**chainé.** A short fast turn performed in a *chain*, or line, across the stage in ballet.

**chairman.** The compère in the old-fashioned music hall entertainment. In some of the old music halls the chairman still reigns and announces the turns and generally 'keeps order'. Cf. AIR-MAN-CHAIR.

**chair warmer.** A (woman) super who remains seated throughout a scene.

**chalk a scene.** In the early stages of rehearsals chalk lines are drawn on the bare stage to indicate the dimensions of the setting, and odd chairs are positioned to indicate furniture. Thus an idea of the acting area is presented and movements can be made as they would be in the actual setting.

**chamber border.**<sup>o</sup> One representing a ceiling, or upper part of a wall. Often there is a frieze or picture-rail, and it is used in a chamber setting that has no ceiling-piece. Several chamber borders are dropped and rest on the flats, thus giving the illusion of a ceiling.

**chamber set.** An interior setting; drawing-room, bedroom, *any* setting other than an oak (i.e. Tudor) one.

**change, act.** An *act change* is the striking of one setting and the erection of another. A SCENE CHANGE.

**character comedy.** Is colloquially known as a GAG SHOW. A plot is drawn round a number of speeches (by the leading man) and stock characters or stock situations, and the players provide the extempore dialogue appropriate to the theme. This used to be a common practice in the fit-ups.

**character, go out of.** This was a common habit in melodrama companies when the leading man would 'step out of his character part' to reprove a rowdy or facetious audience. He gave them a piece of his mind, then went back into character.

**character, in**

**character, in.** See IN CHARACTER.

**character juvenile.** A 'juvenile' actor playing a slightly older type than the customary 'boy' rôles associated with juvenile leads. See JUVENILE JOHN.

**character lines.** Age-lines traced on the face with a lake-liner by a youthful actor playing an old man. See CLAPHAM JUNCTION.

**character man.** An actor specializing in the portrayal of such rôles as lawyers, doctors, and professional men generally. The term distinguishes him from a 'juvenile' man.

**character names.** Frequently artistes are addressed at rehearsals by the producer, or the stage director, in the names of the characters they are playing. 'Will Elizabeth and George move right when Robert goes off; it will give Mrs Phelps a better entrance.'

**character old man.** Frequently a very young man portrays such parts. His performances, however, sometimes betray his youth in a springy step or a straight back. Middle-aged actors usually play these parts in repertory companies.

**character old woman.** An actress specializing in senile parts. In repertory young women often have these parts assigned to them, but it is never very satisfactory for 'youth will out' and few of their performances convince.

**character part.** Since all parts are 'characters' this term is tautological, but it means a rôle other than the lead or the juvenile lead. Typical character parts are: the family doctor, the rich uncle, the 'heavy' or the genial father, the hunting squire, etc. Cf. ROUGH CHARACTER PART.

**charade.** A dramatic representation, the solution of which is guessed by the audience. Jean Anouilh's *Ring round the Moon* is described as 'a charade with music'.

**Charles, his friend.** The second juvenile part, the hero's friend who was usually billed *Charles, his friend* in the old light comedies.

**Charles James.** A theatre box. Rhyming slang on the name Charles James Fox, the fighting statesman (1749-1806), third son of Henry Fox, first Lord Holland. 'Ring me up and I'll fix you up with a Charles Fox'. (An old managerial term, now obsolete).

**chaser.** The last turn on a variety bill, it *chases* the rest. (2) The last item played by the orchestra at the end of a performance. Mostly, however, in Cinemas nowadays, to chase out the audience. Also, the play-out music.

**chatsby.** A nonsensical word used when the correct term is momentarily forgotten or perhaps never known. An elaboration of *chat*, a thing. See COMBINED-CHAT for a fuller definition of this curious word.

**check-takers.** Ushers or members of the Corps of Commissionaires, who take the tickets from the patrons in front of the house. They tear off the counterfoils which are returned to the box office for checking on the following day.

**check the house.** To dim out the houselights just before the rise of the curtain. (2) To check the box-office booking sheets with the counterfoils of the tickets sold.

**check the returns.** See CHECK THE HOUSE (2).

**cheesecake.** The photographs of young actresses showing more than is strictly necessary of their bodies to attract the attention of the 'tired business men' (an American term).

**chef d'orchestre.** A Musical Director, or conductor (obsolescent in the English theatre).

**child star.** A 'minor' who makes a success in 'kid' parts, as e.g. Shirley Temple and Jackie Coogan, and more recently, Andrew Ray, in films.

**chin armour.** A crêpe hair beard. Cf. TIN BEARD.

**china crash.** Pieces of broken china are poured from one vessel into another to produce the effect of falling crockery. Cf. GLASS CRASH.

**chip.** To adversely criticize (a fellow artiste, the audience, the theatre; anything, in fact, of which the speaker disapproves). From the general slang verb *chip*, to reprove, to inveigh against, which Sydney J. Baker records as Australian.

**chironomy.** The art of gesture. Literally, hand movements on the stage. From the Greek *cheir*, hand, plus *nomos*, law.

**chirp.** To give the BIRD to a player or a play. Hence, *chirper*: one who haunts music halls with the object of guying a performance.

**chord in 'G'.** From the orchestra, following any sentimental or 'strong' speech by the hero or the heroine in melodrama. 'Will nobody save me?' wailed the maiden struggling in the arms of Jasper, the villain. 'Yes, I will,' cried a voice (off stage) followed by its owner's entrance 'through gap in hedge'. 'Who are you?' quavered the girl. 'I'm Barnacle Bill the Sailor.' (*Chord in G*, from the orchestra.) There are few such companies touring today, but occasionally an old trouper will murmur *Chord in 'G'* when he speaks, or hears, a line suggestive of melodrama. Cf. TA RAH!

**chord on; chord off**

**chord on; chord off.** A chord on the piano at rehearsals of a musical comedy or a pantomime to give an artiste his cue for entrance (*on*) or exit (*off*). It is still used as a fanfare to announce the entrance of a star, though chiefly in vaudeville.

**choreographer.** A creator of dance design in ballet. *Choreograph* is a dance plan.

**choreographerist.** A variant of the preceding.

**choreography.** Design in ballet dancing. The Greek *choros*, dance, and *graphein*, to write.

**chorine.** A female member of a chorus. Cf. TERPSICHORINE (American).

**chorus.** In the Greek sense, a dance performance by a number of persons, accompanied by song. Also a kind of prologue to a drama. (2) The choristers (male and female) in opera or musical comedy. Cf. SINGING LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

**chorus-rooms.** The choristers' dressing-rooms, usually on the top landing of a theatre.

**chow.** To grumble; be biting sarcasm, critical, or tiresomely garrulous. Compare the slang term *chew the fat*, to talk at length, and tediously, on one subject. 'You are always *chowing* about something.' Cf. CHIP (music halls).

**chronicle play.** An historical play, or a drama written round a well-known personality of historical interest. Examples: *St Joan* by George Bernard Shaw, Daviot's *Richard of Bordeaux*, and the Shakespeare 'King' plays.

**chucker out.** A strongly-built commissionaire whose function is the eviction of unruly barrackers, or any members of the audience whose conduct creates a disturbance and who refuse to leave the theatre when requested.

**circle front spot.** A caged spotlight lantern in front of the dress circle.

**circlers.** Patrons of the dress, or upper circles. 'Are all the *circlers* in their seats?'

**circuit.** A section of footlights or any electrical circuit used in a lighting plot. 'Check your white *circuit*, Electricians!'

**Civic Theatre.** One run by a town corporation and supported by local citizens.

**Clapham Junction.** The criss-cross lines on the face of a character actor who specializes in 'old man' parts. Reminiscent of the multiplicity of railway lines at this famous London railway

junction on the Southern section of the British Railways. Cf. CHARACTER LINES.

**claque.** A bunch of hired applauders. From the French verb *claquer*, to clap.

**claquer.** A member of a CLAUQUE.

**classic drama.** The Classical Greek and Latin plays. They are performed mostly in translation.

**clean** (of comedians and lines). Free from anything to which an audience could take exception. 'Good clean fun.'

**clean comic.** A comedian who does not rely upon 'blue' material for his laughs.

**clear** (of artistes). To leave the stage when not 'discovered' thereon at the rise of the curtain. See 'CLEAR PLEASE!'

**clear, please!** The stage director's order to those who are not discovered on the stage when he rings up the curtain on an act. All the artistes who *clear* take up their positions off stage for their entrances when cued.

**clearer.** A property master's assistant, or assistants, whose job is to *clear* the stage properties before a scene is struck during an act-change. He takes the 'props' into the property room and brings on those used in the next scene. See DEAD.

**clearing stick.** A very long pole used for clearing borders that foul battens or get caught up in a line during a change of scenery. The situation is dealt with from the stage, the stick adjusts the obstruction. Cf. LONG ARM, THE.

**cleat.** A wooden, or iron, projection at the top of a flat over which a line is thrown when setting a scene. (2) To join flats together, the line is thrown over the cleat and the flats drawn close together and the line made fast on the tie-off screw. See the general entry at FLAT.

**cloak and suiter.** The American version of the STAGE-DOOR JOHNNY.

**cloak and sword drama.** A romantic play in the manner of Anthony Hope's *The Prisoner of Zenda* or Alexander Dumas's *The Three Musketeers*. Plays with a 'swagger and dagger' element.

**closed shop.** Applies to non-members of stage unions, e.g. Actors' Equity Association. No employment is permitted to such people.

**cloths.** There are many, from the *stage-cloth* that covers the bare boards of the stage itself to the several *painted cloths* that, suspended from battens, are dropped as required by the scene plot.

## **clou**

The types of cloth used in the theatre will be mentioned throughout this glossary. See STAGE-CLOTH; CEILING-CLOTH; CUT-CLOTH; BACK-CLOTH; etc.

**clou.** The pivot of the play. It is, in its relation to a drama, what the Greeks termed the *omphalos ges*, or navel of the earth: 'But you can't drop that scene, it's the *clou* of the whole thing.' (From the French.)

**clove hitch.** This knot is used for tying battens to hanging cloths. It makes 'assurance doubly sure' if a seamanlike rolling-hitch is substituted. Both, however, are very efficient.

**clown.** A comedian, or buffoon, in a pantomime or a circus. From the Old Norse *klunni*, clumsy, loutish, (fellow). The word is cognate with the Danish *kluntet*, clumsy, maladroit, or, in plain Yorkshire dialect, 'proper gormless'.

**Cocky.** The late Sir Charles B. Cochran, specialist in musical comedy production on the grand scale, and connoisseur, *par excellence*, of pretty girls, who were known as 'Mr Cochran's Young Ladies'. Sir Charles's productions were a feature of English theatre life from the 1920's—the era of the 'bright young people' (some of whom, by the way, are scintillating still)—to the sober.

The music of Noel Coward and Vivian Ellis was popularized through these shows, the best known being: *This Year of Grace*, *Bitter Sweet*, *Bless the Bride*, *Castles in the Air* and *Big Ben*. 'Cocky' has been called the Ziegfeld of the English theatre.

**cocoa butter.** An efficient grease-paint remover and, according to the testimony of 'old Pros', good for restoring the hair.

**coconut shells.** Produce a very realistic effect of horse's hooves. The coconut is sawn in the middle, and the two halves knocked against the stage wall to create the 'clip-clop' sound.

**cod.** To chaff, rag, hoax, pull someone's leg, or to fool a fellow artiste. The verb is perhaps connected with the printing trade term *cod*, a fool, and may ultimately derive from the ancient tavern game *Codden*, a 'guess' contest similar to *bluff* or *brag*, popular in America.

**cod version.** A burlesque of a well-known play.

**coda, tap for.** The musical director, on receiving the signal from the stage manager that the curtain is ready to go up, gives two sharp taps on his desk to indicate that the music must end on a coda.

(2) Artistes are said to *tap for the coda* if their conduct is likely to lead to their being sacked. 'That will tap his coda, he was a fool

## **combined-room**

to answer back like that.' (Musical comedy term.) *Coda*, Italian for a tail, or tail-piece, is a short movement that brings a piece of music to a close. A *codetta* is a short coda.

**collar work** (of performances). Striving hard to get one's lines across (the footlights) to a dull or unresponsive audience. Plugging 'gag-lines', or over-acting comic business to gain legitimate laughter. The reference is to the draught-horse's collar. 'We managed to put the show over, but it was *collar work* all the way.'

**College show.** A musical comedy or a play dealing with (American) College life. E.g., the popular musical, *College Rhythm*, in the 1920's—it featured that memorable number, 'the Varsity drag'. College shows must not be confused with *campus plays* which are performances by members of College dramatic societies in American universities.

**Colly.** Short for the London Coliseum, the popular variety house in St Martin's Lane. Such hypocorisms are common in the theatre, e.g. *Pally*, for Palace. the *Ally Pally*, Alexandra Palace, a one-time theatre and now the television centre of the British Broadcasting Corporation. Compare *Philly*, the American touring artiste's pet name for Philadelphia. (2) Short for Columbine (pantomime artistes of the old school).

**coloratura.** May be described as vocal versatility. Wyld defines it as 'florid variations in singing'. The Italian meaning is 'the art of colouring' which is of great importance in the rendering of *da Capa* arias in opera.

**colour circuit.** A circuit of white, amber, blue, or pink 'mediums'. When colours are unevenly distributed in the footlights one colour may invade the circuit of another medium. 'Put a couple of ambers in the white circuit, Electrics!'

**colour-filter.** See MEDIUM.

**combination.** A *road-combination* or touring variety show.

**combined-chat.** A bed-sitting-room known in the profession as a 'combined-room'. In the old strolling players' language a *chat* meant much the same as the modern slang term 'gadget'; a *chat* was simply a thing, anything. In low slang, however, a *chat* is a louse and these pests are not unknown in combined-rooms, though not in the houses recommended by the official apartments list. cf. CONGEALED, and CHATSBY.

**combined-room.** A bedroom and sitting-room 'combined'. One of the 'classic' landlady advertisements ran: 'I have vacant for next

## come-back

week a large, comfortable combined-room. Piano and lavatory inside.'

**come-back.** A successful return to the stage by a 'retired' star. One of the notable *come-backs* of recent times was that of Gloria Swanson, screen artiste of 'silent days', who gave a brilliant performance in the film *Sunset Boulevard*.

**come down from the flies.** Corresponds to 'come off it' and is addressed to an actor or actress with a tendency to self-inflation over a minor success. Cf. UP IN THE FLIES.

**come on.** To make an entrance. Cf. GO OFF. (2) An American name for a mediocre actor who merely 'comes on to the stage' but cannot act. (3) To improve in technique or ability. 'So and So has come on a lot lately.'

**come to cues.** To cut short a story; to 'cut the cackle and get to the hosses'. A colloquial phrase directed at anyone fond of long-winded narrative, or garrulously explanatory. 'Come to cues, old boy, I'm busy.'

**comedilirium.** A riotous *comedy* that sends the audience *delirious* with laughter. A 'telescope' word of American origin.

**comediienne.** A female comedian. (French *comédienne*.)

**comedietta.** A comedy sketch, or one-act farce, as distinct from a three-acter. Italian diminutive *etta*, tiny, little.

**comedist.** A writer of comedies, *not* a comedian.

**comedy.** A light amusing play dealing with contemporary life and manners, often with a satirical slant, but ending on a 'happy' note. From Greek *komos*, revel, and *ædein*, to sing. See COSTUME COMEDY and cf. FARCE.

**comedy is a serious business.** This paradoxical statement should be regarded as extremely important, for comedy is far more difficult than 'straight' acting. So much depends on an artiste's experience and sense of humour. Perfect timing, subtle intonation, telling facial expressions, and quick reactions—especially in farce—are essential to successful comedy acting and the old actor who told the tyro that 'you can play the fool as much as you like in drama, but *comedy is a serious business*', gave very sage counsel. Serious study has to be given to a comedy part at rehearsal; once the play is produced and an artiste is 'well firmed' and has the 'feel' of his part, he can allow himself a little licence.

**comedy of manners.** A 'society' play in which witty dialogue and a sophisticated atmosphere prevail throughout: for example,

Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan*, Frederick Lonsdale's *On Approval*, T. S. Eliot's *The Cocktail Party*. Cf. CUP-AND-SAUCE PLAY and DRAWING-ROOM COMEDY.

**comer.** A play, or an artiste, showing signs of 'coming on' or being successful.

**comic relief.** Amusing lines or situations which relieve the tension in a drama.

**command performance.** A variety show played at the command of the Royal Family.

**commercial play.** One written solely for money. It has no pretensions to artistry.

**commère.** A female COMPÈRE.

**commonwealth, on a.** A company that acts in a play whose success seems doubtful. The cast agrees to act for a *pro rata* share-out in the takings after the running expenses have been met. Cf. TWOFERS.

**community theatre.** A non-profit-making theatre run by a Group which, either for propaganda or for tendentious reasons, present such plays as are described under COMMONWEALTH.

**compère.** A revue, cabaret or concert commentator. See also COMMERE.

**complimentary.** A benefit performance. The proceeds are given as a *compliment*\* to the artiste for whose benefit the show is given (American). (2) A free (*complimentary*) ticket granted by the management to an artiste. In the plural, tickets distributed to local tradespeople who display advertising matter. They are entitled to free seats in return for showing the bills.

**concert batten.** No. 1 lighting batten used for concerts or to light the stage during rehearsals.

**congealed.** A combined-room: 'What are your digs like this week?' 'Not bad, old boy, though I've only a *congealed*.' (Touring actor's jocular term.)

**connectors.** Accessories used for connecting one electric circuit to another, either temporarily or permanently. Hence, *connector box*, a box containing many connectors for circuits.

**console.** 'A mobile remote control for stage lighting, resembling, and using, certain of the accessories of the Cinema organ: e.g. stop-keys, keys, pistons, pedals, etc. It is suitable for installation in the auditorium or other places in view of the stage.' (Strand Electric & Engineering Company's glossary.)

## **contract**

**contract.** An agreement between the management of a theatre and the artiste engaged to appear in a production. Such contracts are made standard by Actors' Equity.

**contralto.** The lowest of the female voices, between F or G below middle C, to the E or F two octaves above these notes. A top F is very rare and a G rarer still.

**conversation piece.** A dialogue play or play other than one of action and excitement; e.g. the plays of George Bernard Shaw and Oscar Wilde.

**coon.** A negro minstrel or one who 'goes into black face' for such a part: cf. the American slang *coon*, a Negro. Coon is aphetic for *raccoon* or *racoon*, a North American Indian word. The term *coon* is also applied to anyone with a droll disposition, one who is 'the life and soul of the party'.

**cop big.** To catch (*cop*) public favour in a big way. 'The new musical has *copped big* and will probably have a long run.' The verb is a North Country broadening of the Old French *capier*, to seize, capture, catch; cf. the slang phrase, 'You'll *cop it* if you don't behave yourself,' addressed to unruly children several times a day in the Midlands and the North.

**cop the curtain.** To take an unusual number of curtain calls at the end of a performance.

**copper toe.** A sheet of copper at the base of a flat to facilitate its 'running' and to protect the flat.

**coppers, play to.** To do very poor business, the cheap seats only being occupied. A reference to the old fourpenny gallery.

'**core.** Aphetic for ENCORE.

**cork opera.** A minstrel show. From the burnt cork used for blackening the face.

**corner, the.** The Prompt Corner. 'I hope there'll be somebody in the *corner* during my scene in the third act, I'm a bit shaky in that big speech.' In *the corner* is kept the prompt book.

**corner boys.** See END MEN.

**corny.** Outmoded allusions or feeble 'gags'. Either from the rural sense or from the Latin *corneus*, hard as a corn, horny. Such humour is hard to take. 'What a show, the corniest gags, and not a titter from the house!' Cf. CAST-IRON COMIC.

**corps de ballet.** The dancers in a ballet company.

**corpse.** To make a fellow performer's speech or actions ineffective (*dead*) by clumsily cutting in on them. Cf. KILL. (2) To forget

## counterweight system

one's lines, to 'go dead' (American version of the English DRY-UP).

**corpse a laugh.** The American shape of KILL A LAUGH.

**corridor.** Literally a cloth painted to represent a corridor in a house. In the days of elaborate drama with many changes of scenes, a corridor acted as a front cloth and was hung about six feet up stage from the footlights. See FRONT-CLOTH SCENE.

**coryphée.** The principal dancer in a CORPS DE BALLET. French word, Latin *coryphoeus*, from Greek *koruphaïos*, leader (of a chorus in tragedy).

**Così.** The operatic artiste's shortening of *Così Fan Tutte*, by Mozart. He wrote it while musician to the Emperor Joseph II, at whose bidding he composed the work. This short opera is a great favourite at opera festivals.

**costume comedy.** Comedies in which other than modern dress is worn, though chiefly 'periwig and ruffle' plays. Especially perhaps the plays by Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751-1816), whose *The Rivals* and *The School for Scandal* have delighted generations of playgoers, as well as artistes. For what acting parts are Charles and Joseph Surface, Sir Peter Teazle and Lady Teazle, the egregious Mrs Malaprop, the foppish Fag (the first part of many now famous actors), Lady Sneerwell, and the host of smaller parts that were so well worth playing in one's stage apprenticeship! The Compton Comedy Company used to tour the Old English Comedies in the provinces until the company broke up in 1924, and how well they performed these costume plays, notably Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*! The compiler of this glossary had the honour to serve a short period of his apprenticeship during the last tour of the company, which was founded by that fine actor Edward Compton, the father of the brilliant actress Fay Compton, and that craftsman of letters, Compton Mackenzie, whose *The Man in Grey* (adapted from his first novel *The Passionate Elopement*) was in the company's repertoire.

**costume plot.** A list of the cast in a play and the costumes worn by each individual character in every act or scene.

**cottage, the.** A lavatory (touring actors' slang).

**cotton.** See SUPERSTITIONS.

**cough and a spit, a.** A very small character part. More often this is known as TWO LINES AND A SPIT.

**counterweight system.** In modern theatres this system has done

## **country, the**

away with much of the 'pulley-haul' work, and simplified the flying of cloths and scenery. One stage-hand is now able to do the work of several. The weight of the scenery is counter-balanced by weights which are added or removed as needed.

**country, the.** Anywhere out of London, specifically the provincial towns. 'The show went well in town but we caught a cold in the country.'

**coup de théâtre.** A play that is an immediate success and will be certain of a long run. Literally a *theatre stroke* (of luck).

**couronne.** A five shilling (crown) piece. Obsolete.

**Court, the.** The old Court Theatre, Sloane Square, London, the home of naturalistic acting in the 1890's. The first plays of G. B. Shaw, Ibsen, Chekhov and others were first presented here under Harley Granville Barker's management.

**courtesy of the house.** The granting of free admission to a professional artiste or a playwright. Cf. ON ONE'S CARD.

**cover.** To understudy a part. An artiste may be engaged solely to understudy a leading rôle. Frequently, however, players of the subsidiary parts cover the more important characters. A *general understudy* (often the stage manager) covers most parts after the leading rôle, which is usually in a class by itself and requires an artiste of similar appearance and technique as a cover.

**covered way.** The *foyer* at the Glyndebourne Opera House, Sussex, where fame and fashion congregate during the Mozart Festival in high summer. See GLYNDEBOURNE OPERA.

**C.P.** Concert Party. 'What are *you* doing this summer?' 'I've just fixed for C.P. at Margate.'

**crab.** To pull (claw) a play to pieces; adversely criticize; to disparage generally. (2) To spoil an act by clowning or otherwise distracting the audience's attention from a fellow artiste's lines or song. (Music hall.) The term probably has its origin in the Low German *krabben*, to scratch or claw.

**cradle.** A kind of 'bos'un's chair' used for men working in those positions above the stage which cannot be reached by ladder. It consists of a board with rope supports suspended from the GRID.

**crash.** Any 'crash' effect. Splintering glass is known as a *glass crash* and results from a bucketful of broken glass being poured into an empty bucket. A door slam is a *door crash*; breaking crockery is a *china crash*.

**create** (a part). To be the first to portray it in a London production.

The artiste brings the part to life from the typewritten script. As opposed to a touring artiste who has to slavishly follow the pattern produced by the original player in London.

**credit list.** The list of acknowledgments of indebtedness to firms who have lent articles of furniture, electrical gear, draperies, etc., to dress the stage.

**credits.** The CREDIT LIST.

**crêpe hair.** Is used to make artificial beards. It is stuck on with spirit gum.

**crêpe hair part.** One requiring a beard. Cf. SPIRIT GUM PART.

**Crewed, be.** Stranded on Crewe railway station in Cheshire, the famous junction where theatrical companies spend many hours waiting for trains on (often wet) Sundays. It is a dismal station. Cf. FISH AND ACTORS.

**Cri, the.** The Criterion Theatre, or the restaurant, in Piccadilly Circus, London.

**cricks.** The critics. An American contraction, of which *crix* is a variant. Hence *pix crix*, cinema critics.

**crime play.** A thriller featuring murder, theft, or crime generally.

**crit.** Short for *critique* or the notice of a first-night performance.

**Critics' Circle.** Was founded in May, 1913, with the object of promoting the art of criticism and to foster and safeguard the professional interests of the members and to provide social intercourse among them. The headquarters were at the Hall of the Institute of Journalism, London, E.C.4.

**crossfire.** The rapid cross-talk of two comedians. They fire 'wise-cracks' at each other.

**crossing the stage.** Is not permitted to visitors, or guests of artistes, unless formal permission has been obtained from the management. Crossing, that is, after the curtain has fallen. It is a great privilege for a stranger to the theatre to be allowed to walk on the setting when the curtain is down.

**cross-talk comics.** A comedian and his feed in a vaudeville turn.

**cross-over beard.** A disguise for an actor who doubles parts. It helps him to *cross over* from one character to another, also to *cross* the stage unrecognized.

**crowd.** A theatrical company. 'I was with a Shakespearean *crowd* last summer.' (2) Supernumeraries engaged for *crowd* scenes in a theatre or film.

## **Crummles**

**Crummles.** A HAM actor. After Vincent Crummles, a noted theatrical eccentric and BARNSTORMER, the character created by the novelist Charles Dickens.

**crux.** The problem of the piece (play). From the Latin for cross.

**cue.** The last line of a speech which gives the next player the signal to speak. Either from the French *queue*, the tail (of a speech), or from the Latin *quando*, when (to speak or come in). Hence ENTRANCE CUE.

**cue-biter.** A player with a tendency to BITE CUES (q.v.).

**cue-bound.** An artiste who is unable to continue a stage conversation unless he receives the exact (verbatim) cue as written in the script. Some players become cue-bound as an excuse for forgetting their next lines: 'I didn't get the right cue.'

**cue, curtain.** See CURTAIN CUE.

**cue-despiser.** One who speaks lines irrespective of cues, thus ruining others' speeches.

**cue-lines.** Those lines upon which one takes up cues. (2) The electric cables leading from the stage manager's cue-board in the prompt corner to the various parts of the stage where sound, or other effects are carried out.

**cue-list.** A special list of cues (apart from the actual plot) kept by the stage manager, electrician, property master and others who are concerned with the carrying out of effects, etc.

**cue, miss a.** To be late for a stage entrance, or not to hear a spoken cue on the stage. Colloquially, to miss the point of a story, or be inattentive.

**cue-sheet.** Another name for a CUE-LIST. It contains the list of cues for effects.

**cues, pick up.** See PICK UP CUES.

**cue-struck.** A player who has to be given the *exact* word cue is so described. A variant of CUE-BOUND, i.e. *bound* by the *exact* cue.

**culmination** (in a play). The coming to a climax. Latin *culmen*, summit.

**cup-and-saucer comedy or drama.** One performed in a drawing-room setting. A 'Society play'. Tea is usually served in one of the acts. The term is obsolete and has been superseded by *cocktail drama*.

**curtain cue.** The lines or business which bring down the curtain.

Cf. TAG-LINE.

**curtain, fake.** See FAKE A CURTAIN.

**curtain, good.** See GOOD CURTAIN.

**curtain music.** A few bars played after the entr'acte music to create an atmosphere before the rise of the curtain on the next act. This music is usually played after the lowering of the house lights.

**curtain, quick or slow.** According to the atmosphere or tension in a play, the curtain falls either quickly (as in farce) or slowly where there is a dramatic PICTURE at the end of a scene.

**curtain raiser.** A one-act play lasting about half an hour; for example, J. M. Barrie's *Shall we join the Ladies?* It usually precedes a play that falls short of the customary length. Cf. LEVER DE RIDEAU, an opening piece, and ONE-ACTER.

**curtain speech.** Words spoken by a leading player after receiving an ovation. (2) A long speech that 'brings down the curtain' at the end of an act or of the play. (3) A prologue, as in *Edward My Son*. In weekly repertory companies, a short speech that advertises the following week's production.

**curtain-taker.** A conceited leading lady or leading man. Fond of taking calls and making curtain speeches.

**curved back-cloth.** Sometimes used as a substitute for a cyclorama to give an illusion of distance, which it can do most effectively if cleverly lit. See CYCLORAMA.

**customers.** The music-hall comedian's term for his audience. 'Now, listen, customers', is a favourite gambit with provincial 'comics' in touring revues.

**cut.** To excise LINES

**cut-cloth.** A cloth forming the background scene may have a doorway or window space, in front of which an actual door, or window, piece is set.

**cut in.** To cut into a fellow artiste's speech by anticipating a cue, thus killing the efficacy of his lines.

**cut out.** To eliminate risqué or offensive lines in the script; to remove 'gags' that have misfired on trial. (2) To omit a speech or line, and so occasion a DRY-UP.

**cut-out piece.** See PROFILE.

**cut to the seagulls.** To shorten a scene or cut speeches out of a play, e.g. for a twice-nightly version. One throws offal to seagulls (an American term).

**cyclo.** Short for *cyclorama*.

**cyclorama.** A permanent cyclorama is a domed wall at the back of the stage; but few theatres are fitted with them, so a curved

## cyke

back-cloth is substituted. The main object of a cyclorama is to give depth or distance, which can be very well produced by means of skilful lighting and the use of CUT-OUTS, GROUND-ROWS, and CUT-CLOTHS lowered in front of the cyclorama. Plastic models have become very effective lately, especially in pantomimes. They can represent trees, balconies, chimney pots, eaves of houses, even haystacks, made to scale in relation to the distance suggested by the producer. Set in front of the 'cyke', these props are extremely realistic. Deriving from the Greek *kuklōs*, a circle, and *horama*, sight, the cyclorama came to the English theatre from Germany in 1913.

**cyke.** Short for CYCLORAMA.

## D

**Da Capa aria.** Also known as the *grand aria*, it is an aria in which the first subject is followed by another contrasting with it in mood and treatment, after which the first is repeated (operatic).

**daddy.** The man who plays 'elderly' comedy parts in a repertory company. The jovial, rich uncle, the comic father, the ingénue's guardian, and such rôles. (2) The usual nickname of a provincial actor-manager who is 'daddy' to his company of BOYS AND GIRLS.

**dago part.** That of a Spaniard, Portuguese or Italian. From the common Spanish name *Diego*.

**daisy.** The Victorian precursor of the present-day *honey*. The term came to England from the United States about 1880 and was quoted in a newspaper as applied to Wilfred Denver, the hero of the drama *The Silver King*, and became a synonym for any popular favourite. 'Have you seen Edna May in...? She's an absolute *daisy*.'

**damager.** The manager. He allegedly *damages* the play and the artistes' prospects.

**dame angle.** The feminine angle of a play. *Dame* being American slang for a woman.

**Dame May.** The late Dame May Whitty, the English actress who did so much for theatrical welfare. She was the first actress to receive the honour of Damehood, and never was an honour more richly deserved. Her early stage career was spent in the company of such great stars as Sir Henry Irving and the Kendals. Of the many memorable parts Dame May created during her long

career perhaps the best known was that of Susan Throstle in Sir James Barrie's evergreen *Quality Street*. But to modern playgoers her New York success as the mother in *Thérèse Raquin*, and Mrs Branson in the London production of *Night Must Fall*, will be cherished memories. The latter part of Dame May's life was spent in Hollywood, where she made films that owe much of their success to her own performances. With her husband, Ben Webster, Dame May worked assiduously to better the lot of the rank and file of the profession, and it was in the Whitty's flat in Bedford Street, Covent Garden, that British Actors' Equity Association was founded. The dining-table, round which many discussions took place, is enshrined in the Council Room at Equity Headquarters in Imperial Buildings, Kingsway, London. Prior to the formation of Equity, Dame May was on the Council of the Actors' Association, which died on the inauguration of the new movement. A memorial service was held for Dame May Whitty at St Paul's Church, Covent Garden.

**damn the show** (of critics). To criticize adversely; to SLATE generally. See also:

**damper**. An adverse criticism. 'The reviewers put the *damper* on the show.'

**dance director**. The official in charge of the stage dancers in musical comedy productions. He arranges the pattern of the dances and rehearses the orchestra. Cf. CHOREOGRAPHER.

**dance interlude**. A dancing act put on during an interval in a drama or a film.

**danseur** (feminine *danseuse*). A stage dancer.

**dark**. A theatre is said to be dark when it is closed pending a new production. There is no front-of-house illumination or sky-signs. 'The Playhouse is *dark* until next month, so we might be able to have the stage for rehearsals of the Sunday show.'

**dark-blue evening dress**. Many leading actors prefer to have their evening suits made of very dark blue material, because this colour appears black under stage lighting and looks exceptionally smart FROM THE FRONT. There is also a superstition that to wear black on the stage is unlucky.

**dashing hero**. The leading man in romantic drama. Full of dash and vigour. (Obsolete.) Cf. JUVENILE JOHN.

**date**. A theatre booking. A town on the company's TOUR LIST. 'What sort of *dates* are you doing in the Spring.'

**date, open**

**date, open.** See OPEN DATE.

**date, pencilled.** See PENCILLED DATE.

**day of play.** Production day, full of FIRST NIGHT NERVES and chaos.

**dead.** (adj.) Applause is *dead* when it is not of sufficient strength to warrant a curtain call.

**dead.** (noun) An electric circuit which has failed. (2) A piece of furniture or stage property, spot or floodlight, sound effect, etc., is said to be *dead* when it is no longer required by the plot. During a change of scenery all *dead* properties are taken to the property room unless they are to be resurrected in some later scene. 'Put that telephone on the stand-by table; it is *alive* for the last act.'

**dead.** (verb) *dead* is used by stage carpenters and flymen. When adjusting borders to mask light-battens it is necessary for the carpenter, or one of his henchmen, to stand in the auditorium and call instructions to the men on the ropes that support the battens on which the borders are fixed. The men work on the fly-platform and hoist or lower as directed. The battens are supported by a SET OF (three) LINES: short, centre, and long, which are rove through blocks (pulleys); when adjusted, the ropes are cleated or *deaded* to the fly-rail. 'Up on your long; drop your short slightly; now just a strain on the centre-line. Right! *Dead* it at that.'

**D.B.O.** Short for Dead Black Out, a direction on the lighting plot. 'The act opens in a *D.B.O.*'

**dead act.** A dud act; an act that is bad to the point of insulting an audience.

**dead! dead! and never called me mother!** Lady Isabel's poignant cry on the death of little Willie in the sentimental play *East Lynn* by Mrs Henry Wood. The line is a theatrical classic and much quoted by people outside the profession.

**dead front-board.** A stage switchboard having a front panel which conceals the live parts.

**dead heads.** People on the FREE LIST, e.g. bill displayers. As far as the box office is concerned, they are dead.

**dead letter-perfect** (of a player in a part). The desideratum at dress rehearsal and, it is hoped, at the opening performance. Cf. WORD-PERFECT.

**dead pack.** A stack of flats not in use.

**dead-pan face.** A face utterly expressionless. Of comedians who perform the craziest antics and crack the craziest gags without a

change of expression, and the more the audience laughs the solemn they look. Hence: a *dead-pan singer*, who has the same technique.

**dead season.** The summer season in London or New York, because it is said to be *dead* theatrically. Most people are out of town on seaside, or country, vacation.

**dead stick.** A situation on the stage where all the performers are unable to continue the dialogue. It is usually caused by a contretemps so dire as to paralyse the cast. A general DRY-UP.

**deadwood.** Unsold theatre tickets. Nobody occupies the (wood) seats. Cf. THE WOOD FAMILY.

**début** or **debut.** A player's first appearance in public.

**decencies.** Pads used to conceal outline when wearing costume in, e.g., Shakespeare or Old English Comedy (a Victorian term now obsolete).

**deck-hand.** A scene-shifter; a stage-hand. The term is an American one borrowed from the sea, the wooden boards of the stage suggesting the deck of a ship. Cf. GRIP-HAND.

**decor.** Scenery and stage decoration generally. Adopted from the French in recent years.

**Deli-board.** Short for *Delicolour control board*. See:

**Delicolour Controller.** An apparatus that facilitates changes of colour in stage lighting. Working on the dimmer principle, the colour changes can take place at any desired speed. A dial indicating the standard range of colour media can be operated by moving a pointer to any colour required by the lighting plot, and the master change-lever at the side of the Deli-board is operated to merge the colours from the lighting circuits controlled by the unit. By moving the indicator to any colour medium, and working the side lever, the controller of the unit can brighten or reduce light, and change any circuits he pleases. Blues in the footlights can be changed to amber, amber to pink, and so on, by this simple method. A more technical description of the function of the *Delicolour controller* can be found in any up-to-date manual on stage lighting. An admirable book is *The Technique of Stage Lighting*, by R. Gillespie Williams (Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, Ltd., London).

**delivery.** An artiste's stage voice. It is pitched somewhat higher than in conversation off stage, in order that it carry to every part of the house. In some theatres there is a sound board at the back

## 'Delphi

of the auditorium which helps the acoustics; in large theatres, much use is made of amplifiers. But any actor worthy of the name ought to be able to throw his voice to any part of the theatre without factitious aid, or any strain on the vocal chords. The training in voice production provided by touring repertory companies (especially in Shakespearean productions) cannot be valued too highly. Theatres of every size were visited by these companies and an artiste used his voice accordingly.

**'Delphi.** Aphetic for the Adelphi Theatre, Strand, London, commonly applied to the original Adelphi Theatre of drama fame. See ADELPHI DRAMA.

**demet.** Cheap material used for window curtains in stage settings.

**dent the lid.** To applaud vociferously and loudly. The simile comes from the beating of an ash-can lid by street urchins. They dent the lid.

**Denville actor.** One whose work is exclusively under the management of Alfred Denville in repertory. The Denville stock companies have been an institution in the English provincial theatre for many years.

**Denville Hall.** A hostel for aged actors, founded by Alfred Denville.

**deportment.** Bearing upon the stage. The carriage, movements, repose, etc. One of the most important lessons to be learnt on the stage is how to be still. Beginners seldom know what to do with their hands and have a tendency to shuffle their feet and hold themselves stiffly. The old Costume Comedy Companies, and Shakespearean Repertory were excellent schools for deportment. Actors were deprived of that easy way out of the hands difficulty—the trouser pockets. There were no pockets in costume.

**deus ex machina.** An artificial solver of a dramatic problem. The Greeks used to lower a god on to the stage. The Latin meaning is a god from a crane (or machine).

**dialogue.** A conversation between two or more persons. Hence stage conversation generally. The Greek *dialegesthai*, to converse; talk.

**diamond horseshoe.** The fashionable audience at the first night of the opera season or the *première* of a play. Their jewels glisten in the horseshoe-shaped dress circle. Cf. GRAND CIRCLE.

**diction.** This term is strictly applied to *language*, not to speech; therefore it is incorrect to refer to a speaker's diction as being good or bad, when the term delivery is what we are criticizing.

**die standing up.** To fail to 'register' with an audience. To bore them: 'So and So is *dead standing up*, he'll never get over in the part.' (American.)

**digger, the.** The part of the *grave-digger* in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

**digs.** Short for *diggings*, or theatrical apartments. The term has its origin in the huts which were built round the diggings on the goldfields.

**digs, fix.** See **FIX DIGS**.

**digs quarter.** That part of a town where the **PRO DIGS** are situated.

**dim.** To check the lights on the stage or in the auditorium. (2) A dull audience.

**dimmer.** The electrician's word for a rheostat or 'resistance'. It reduces the voltage in a circuit and so *dims* the light according to the requirements of the lighting plot. Dimmers vary in type, but the commonest in use today employs a moving contact arm which varies the amount of resistance wire in series with a circuit. This type of dimmer is wire-wound and can be of the rotary, radial or slider type. The old-fashioned liquid dimmer, though still used in the older theatres, is obsolescent. There is also a resistance called a *reactance dimmer*, which uses an electronic valve to control the voltage.

**dimmer-board.** Short for dimmer control-board.

**dinarly.** As occasionally heard among 'old Pros'. It is Parlyaree for money, though more often as *nanty dinarly*, no money, a corruption of the Italian *niente*, nothing, and *dinaro*, money. In this sense it means that the 'ghost has not walked' and the speaker is anxiously awaiting **TREASURY**. See general entry at **PARLYAREE**.

**dinner interval.** The long interval for dining at the Glyndebourne Festival of Mozart and Classical Opera. Those who tasted the Glyndebourne wines of pre-war days are not likely to forget them. These wines were, alas, sold during that disastrous war. The wine list, embellished with appropriate quotations from the Greek Anthology, was stimulating reading. After the meal guests paraded the exquisite gardens until the bells summoned them to the auditorium. See **GLYNDEBOURNE OPERA**.

**dip.** A small trap in the stage floor hiding light plugs to which spot, flood, and projector lights are connected. (2) A varnish used for colouring, or frosting, vacuum-type lamps in the old-type foot-lights. Cf. **LACQUER**.

## **dire**

**dire.** The uncomplimentary adjective used by professional artistes to describe a bad performance by a fellow player. The word is traditional. 'Did you ever see anything so *dire* as Blank's Othello?'

**dirty make-up box.** See SUPERSTITIONS.

**disappearing footlights.** Those that sink into a well and are not visible to an audience.

**discipline in the theatre.** Outside the Naval Service there is no discipline so necessary—or so strict—as that in the theatre: and in many respects a theatre company resembles a ship's company. The maxim 'A happy ship is an efficient ship' can be equally applied to a theatre, for a well-disciplined company is a happy one. Discipline spells efficiency and it is essential, once the curtain has risen on a performance, that the strictest routine be observed by everybody, from the star to the call boy. In a ship all live in one hull, as all artistes act in one building. It is incumbent on each one of the company to contribute his full share to the success of the production. Loyalty to one's management and fellow artistes, respect for 'seniority' (of experience, or in the literal sense), the recognition that such notices as *Silence* and *No Smoking* mean what they say, the observance of courtesies (e.g. to the stage staff, and to the call boy who, if he is not thanked for calling an artiste, is not to blame when the discourteous artiste misses an entrance cue). Whatever happens, THE SHOW MUST GO ON and private troubles and grievances are not obtruded during a performance. Players have been known to go through a performance when extremely ill. To complain is not 'the done thing'; all that matters is that the production should run as smoothly and efficiently as a well-run ship. And *punctuality* is especially desirable. Artistes are expected to be on the stage in plenty of time for their entrances and for the curtain calls at the end of the play. All these things can be classed as theatre discipline; and the stricter the management, the better the production. Cf. SHOW MUST GO ON, THE.

**discovered.** A single player on the stage at the rise of the curtain is said to *be discovered*.

**divertissement.** Literally, a diversion or interlude, either as a sketch or as a short ballet between the acts of a drama.

**divot.** A toupee. From the golf sense. A tuft of hair on the head resembling a slice of turf cut by a bad stroke.

**do as Garrick did.** The advice given to a disgruntled star who is

upset by an adverse press notice. The great David Garrick is said to have written his own notices.

**dock-doors.** The doors of a scenery dock, or as it is commonly called, scene dock.

**dock, scene.** See SCENE DOCK.

**doctor.** To edit a typescript of a play, or adapt one for, say, twice-nightly presentation. To make judicious cuts without detracting from the value of the play as a whole. Cf. VET.

**dog tour.** A tour of adjacent towns. Like the dog, it stops at every lamp-post.

**dog town.** A date where a play is 'tried on the dog' before presentation in the metropolis. A TRY-OUT TOWN.

**dog, try it on the.** See TRY IT ON THE DOG.

**dog's letter.** See LITTERA CANINA.

**dome.** That part of a cyclorama which curves over the top of the setting. (2) The position of the front-of-house projectors known as *dome spots* or *dome arcs*. (3) Beerbohm Tree's room in the dome of His Majesty's Theatre. This room is a 'show piece' and is surrounded by magnificent tapestries depicting all Shakespeare's characters.

**domestic drama.** Plays about 'ordinary people' ('like you and me'), dealing with every-day situations and problems in the average home. Uncomplex in plot and dialogue. Typical of this type of play is *George and Margaret*, the great success in the London theatre just before the second world war.

**dominant lighting.** The main lighting on the setting. Cf. SECONDARY LIGHTING.

**domino.** A false note played by the piano at rehearsal.

**domino thumper.** One who plays the piano on the stage as a single turn. From its black and white keys.

**Don, the.** Short for *Don Giovanni*, the opera by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791). This opera was first produced in 1887 following upon the tremendous sensation of *Figaro*.

**door slam effect.** A heavy piece of wood hinged on to another and dropped at cue. Or a door set in a frame off-stage and slammed at cue.

**door space.** That space in a flat in which a door frame is set.

**double.** To play two parts. One straight, the other in character and so disguised by a beard or other effective camouflage. (Of furniture.) To use (say) a settee for two scenes by changing the covers.

## **double-act**

Often a divan can be **VAMPED** by means of ginger-beer boxes, cushions, and a length of chintz.

**double-act.** Two vaudeville artistes, cross-talk comedians, or singers, e.g. the famous Layton and Johnson team of the 1920's. A **DOUBLE TURN**.

**double crown.** The most commonly used playbills, measuring thirty by twenty inches. The type seen in theatre-booking agencies, or shop windows. Cf. **SIX SHEET**.

**Doughnut, Bobby.** The punning nickname bestowed upon the famous stage and screen star Robert Donat by members of Sir Frank Benson's Shakespearean Company in which he served his apprenticeship.

**downstairs.** The ground-floor section of the auditorium. Cf. **FLOOR, THE**.

**downtowners.** Down-town theatres (American).

**drag part.** The part of a woman played by a man. He *drags* his skirt across the stage—or he did when this term was first coined in the 1800's. A typical drag part was the lead in *Charley's Aunt*, where the actor wore the bonnet and long skirt of that era. 'My dear, he came to the Chelsea Arts (Ball) in *drag*!' The term *drag* is much favoured by homosexuals.

**drain, go down the** (of a line or gag). To fall flat, be wasted on a dull audience. 'What a house! all the best gags *went down the drain*.' (Music halls.)

**drama.** A prose or verse composition giving the story in dialogue.  
(2) The events leading to the climax of a play.

**drama company.** A theatrical company playing a repertoire of melodrama, or one touring the traditional drama of the evergreen variety like *East Lynn*, *Maria Martin*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Few of these plays are performed today.

**drama den.** A provincial theatre specializing in the presentation of heavy drama. The term is pejorative and used today of an old theatre where only the poorest companies are booked. Few such theatres exist since the advent of the cinema.

**drama house.** A more dignified name than the preceding. These theatres, known as 'Thirds', or the 'Number threes', employ stock companies to act the time-honoured plays that were popular at the Adelphi Theatre in its heyday. The standard of acting in these theatres is distinctly 'ham', and the audiences are mainly rustics or artisans. This type of drama, however, is almost extinct.

**drama man.** A stock company actor. One following the Vincent Crummles tradition.

**dramactor.** A contraction of drama-actor (American).

**dramagedy.** A telescoping of *drama* and *tragedy*. A tragic drama.

**dramatic.** Of, or appertaining to, the drama, hence *dramatic situation*.

**dramatic agent.** Theatrical agent.

**dramatic critic.** One who is professionally engaged in:

**dramatic criticism.** The reviewing of theatrical performances by newspaper critics.

**dramatic line.** The orthodox principle on which a drama is constructed: the initial incident, the rising action, the climax, the falling action, and *dénouement*, the catastrophe and conclusion.

**dramatis personæ.** Literally, the persons in the drama. The cast of a play as it is printed on the programme in order of appearance.

**dramatist.** Originally a writer of *dramas* but now applied to anyone who writes for the theatre, though playwright has superseded the term in recent years.

**dramatize.** To put a novel into dramatic form, or otherwise prepare for stage presentation.

**dramaturge.** A playwright, from *dramaturgy*, the writing and production of drama. The Greek *dramatourgos*, drama-working; drama + *ergein*, to work.

**drame.** French, a tragic play containing some humour in contrast with the tragic tone.

**drammer.** Melodrama (actors' jocular). Hence the heavy pun *drammertures* applied to amateur dramatic societies attempting such plays.

**drapes.** Curtains of velvet or fabric used in place of scenery in revues or in repertory productions in 'Little' theatres. Cf. **PLAY IN CURTAINS**.

**draw.** An attraction. 'Whatever might be said about this play, Blank will be a *draw*.'

**draw-name.** A box-office name. The player draws the audiences to the theatre.

**drencher pipe.** Is fitted near the top of the safety (fire) curtain and can be turned on in case of fire to flood the iron and so prevent overheating.

**dress, Basil.** See **BASIL DRESS**.

**dress circle.** The first tier above the pit. So called because patrons occupying these seats wear evening dress. In some provincial

## **dress rehearsal**

theatres it is, however, considered ostentatious to do so; and even in the metropolis fewer people are 'dressing', which is regrettable.

**dress rehearsal.** The final rehearsal in costume, with the full stage settings and lighting as they will appear at the opening performance. These rehearsals are run through as performances and nobody is pulled up by the producer. Criticism is made afterwards. The stage director is in the auditorium to make notes of any shortcomings in the lighting, scenery, or make-up of the artistes. On the following morning the company will be 'called' on to the stage to hear the producer's comments and suggestions.

See IT'LL BE ALL RIGHT ON THE NIGHT.

**dress the house.** See PAPER THE HOUSE.

**dress the part.** To wear clothes appropriate to the character.

**dress the stage.** To decorate the stage in consonance with the period of the play. To fix curtains, carpets, light brackets, chandeliers, etc., and generally furnish the scenes.

**dress well on and off.** This rider in an advertisement for artistes is often seen in theatrical newspapers. Repertory companies expect artistes to be well-dressed on the stage as well as 'in the street'. The advertisement usually runs: 'Wanted artistes for Repertory; all lines; dress well on and off.' A variant of this requirement is: 'Good modern wardrobe essential.'

**dresser.** A male, or a female, who assists a leading player during the changes of costume, and generally acts as valet or maid. (2)  
A 'walker-on' who has a good appearance and is impeccably tailored. He helps to *dress* the stage.

**dressings-room lawyer.** A redresser of the wrongs of others and preventer of his, or her, own. On the analogy of *sea lawyer* and *barrack-room lawyer*. Since the advent of the Actor's Equity Association there have been less abuse of artistes' rights and a clearer understanding as to what constitutes those rights. Still, however, the dressings-room lawyer persists in the smaller companies.

**dressings-room order.** When allocating dressing-rooms the stage director does so in order of seniority. The principals occupy the rooms nearest the stage; the second leads and the supporting cast, those on the first and upper landings.

**dressings room, star.** See STAR DRESSING-ROOM.

**drinkers save stamps.** This warning was sometimes seen in advertisements for stock companies in the Victorian days, and even today it is occasionally found. Drinkers need not apply.

**drop, the.** Short for ACT DROP.

**drop-cloth.** (Usually) a FRONT-CLOTH.

**drop-curtain.** The same as ACT DROP.

**drop scene.** A cloth is *dropped* in front of a setting which has to be struck and changed during the scene that is played in front of the cloth.

**dropsy.** A gratuity or 'tip'. From the *dropping* of money into the open palm of the recipient. 'We'll have to give out the *dropsy* at the end of the week, the local staff is one of the best we have struck this tour.' The term is borrowed from Cockney. (2) Salary (music hall artiste's colloquial).

**drugget.** Coco-matting or an old stair carpet, placed at the back and sides of the stage immediately behind the setting, to reduce the noise of the artistes walking behind the scenes during the action of the play. From the French *droguet*, the word is cognate with the Dutch *droog*, dry. Ernest Weekley suggests that the term may have applied to material manufactured without water.

**drugget-pin.** A nail with a large brass flat head to keep druggets in place. It is very easily removed.

**drum roll.** Is used in thrillers in much the same way as curtain music in other plays. The roll of the drum creates an eerie atmosphere before the rise of the curtain.

**Druriolanus.** Drury Lane Theatre, London. From the nickname EMPEROR AUGUSTUS, q.v.

**Drury Lane** (of acting technique). Heavily dramatic.

**dry-up.** To forget one's lines, hence a *dry-up*, a sudden silence on the stage. (2) To cause others to pause, or otherwise become incapable of speech, on the stage, by introducing extraneous lines or amusing business. 'That new gag of Henry's dried us all up.' (3) (Of a touring company.) To be stranded in a town through inability to pay the landladies. This state of affairs can no longer exist since the stamping out of bogus managements by EQUITY. Cf. BALLOON, CORPSE.

**dry-up company.** A small touring company under a bogus management. One likely to find itself stranded at any time. Such a one is admirably described by J. B. Priestley in his *The Good Companions*, and several in the equally readable *Playing to the Gods* by John Drummond, a novelist who writes with wit and first-hand knowledge of theatrical vicissitudes and customs.

**dude.** A languid, immaculately clad, light comedian who usually

## **dumb it down**

wears a monocle and speaks with a drawl. He acts in the best traditions of the Victorian 'silly ass' as exemplified by such artistes as the late George Grossmith. American in origin, the term derives from the German *dude*, a foolish fellow (Grimm); and is shortened from the Low German *duden-dop*, *duden-kop* or *dudel-dop*, a lackadaisical fellow. (Skeat.)

**dumb it down.** To eliminate subtleties and to stress the obvious in dialogue. Generally to broaden a performance and play down to the level of the *dumb* blondes and dim-witted males of a 'backward' audience.

**dumb show.** Expressive eye-play and gestures in a wordless drama. See MIME and contrast MUSSITATE, and GOLDFISH.

**dump.** An unsold theatre ticket. Cf. DEAD WOOD. (2) A poor date off the beaten track. 'What a *dump*. We only 'just got our baskets out.'

**dungeon.** The cellar under the stage where are the band-room, odd store cupboards and the like. It is very gloomy and full of booby traps for the unwary. Odd pieces of scenery, wardrobe baskets, light cables from the prompt corner cue-boards to remote-control effects under the stage, are strewn about and likely to trip artistes passing across the cellar floor on their way to under-stage dressing-rooms.

**duologue.** A conversation between two persons. A dialogue, or a short play featuring two characters. e.g. the play *Jealousy*.

# E

**early doors.** Doors leading to the cheaper parts of the house—the pit and gallery. They are opened earlier than those of the more expensive section of the auditorium.

**early doors this way!** The direction by the doorkeeper to patrons of the pit and gallery.

**eat a play** (of an audience). To appreciate every line or situation. The answer to the artiste's prayer.

**eat the ginger.** Play the leading part, or one with good lines and a chance for showy acting. (Adopted from the United States.)

**ecstasis.** A term used in elocution for the pronouncing long of a vowel that should be short. The literal Greek meaning is a stretching out.

**Edinburgh Festival.** The yearly festival of music and drama in the 'Athens of the North'. Starting under the artistic management of the Glyndebourne Society the season has become increasingly popular with the years and is perhaps the most brilliant assembly in Europe. Much of its success is due to the energetic work of Rudolf Bing, the present manager of the Metropolitan Opera House, New York, and formerly of the Glyndebourne Opera. The finest orchestras, under the world's most talented conductors, appear at the festival; and opera is performed by the Glyndebourne Company under the artistic direction of Carl Ebert and, until he died, Fritz Busch, so long associated with the brilliant productions of Mozart operas. Plays are presented with leading artistes at the local theatres, and the atmosphere is one of cultural and æsthetic pleasure. Cf. BATH ASSEMBLY.

**effects.** The NOISES OFF: door bells, and slams; street noises, the revving of car engines; horses' hooves; thunder, rain, sea waves over shingle, etc. Many of these effects can be produced on a panatrope, but lots are still used in the old-fashioned way. Disc and slide projectors are used for optical illusions, fireworks are employed for other spectacular effects. Ossidue, the surplus from gold leaf impressing, can be blown into practical fire effects to produce sparks. But there are many ways in which reality can be approximated on the stage, and any handbook on stage effects can be consulted. Throughout this glossary such methods are explained in their alphabetical order.

**effects man.** Is grandiosely known by the title *Effects Director*. He is responsible for all stage illusions and off-stage noises, and is often the ingenious inventor of new methods of producing a desired effect. In *The Wrecker*, a successful train-wreck thriller of the 1920's, there were hundreds of noises and lighting effects plotted; an effects crew worked almost ceaselessly throughout the play. And, at the 'high stop', when the express thundered past the signal box, twenty men worked the effect under the 'baton' of the effects director, who controlled the noise in the manner of an orchestra conductor. Each man came in 'on the beat' and the effect was a masterpiece of concerted action, and earned a tremendous round of applause at every performance.

**effects projectors.** They produce rain, snow, lightning, clouds, sea waves, etc. The stereopticon is especially useful for scenic effects.

## **E-flat revue**

**E-flat revue.** A touring revue of the cheaper sort.

**élançé.** The darting movement in ballet dancing.

**electric lighting.** Was first used in the English theatre in 1881 at the performance of the Gilbert and Sullivan opera *Patience* at the Savoy Theatre.

**electric sticks.** See LIGHTNING STICKS.

**elevator stage.** A lift-operated stage. Cf. SINKING STAGE, and SINK.

**elevators.** Are placed inside the shoes of short-statured artistes to give them height.

**elocution.** The art of public speaking. It embraces articulation delivery, intonation, inflection, modulation, pronunciation, tone, pitch, pace and rhythm. Easy movements and correct breathing are essential to clear and effective speaking on the stage. From the Latin *eloque*, to speak out. See EYES LEVEL WITH THE DRESS CIRCLE.

**emote.** To display emotion in a dramatic scene. To TEAR A PASSION TO PIECES.

**Emperor Augustus.** The late Sir Augustus Harris, manager of Drury Lane Theatre, London, for many years. Cf. DRURIOLANUS and AUGUSTUS DRURIOLANUS.

**enceinte.** The enclosure of a theatre. 'Opinions were divided as to the place in the *enceinte* of the magnificent theatre.' From the French *enceindre*, to gird around, enclose. (Obsolete.)

**enchainement.** Such a sequence of steps in ballet dancing as makes up a phase in the dance.

**encore.** A request for the repetition of a song or sketch. Usually shortened to 'CORE. (2) The repetition given in response to the audiences' acclamation. From the French. Cf. BIS.

**end men.** The two comedians on the flanks of the blackface chorus in a Negro minstrel troupe.

**endearments.** *Dear* and *darling* as forms of address are common in the theatre, no intense feeling being implied.

**engagement.** The conventional term for a SHOP on the stage.

**English Horace, the.** Ben Jonson (1573-1637), believed to have been so called by Thomas Dekker, his contemporary. An intimate friend of Shakespeare, Jonson had Horatian wit and perhaps his best-known play, frequently revived, is *Every Man in his Humour*. Ben Jonson wrote the famous lyric 'Drink to me only with Thine Eyes'.

**English Salzburg, the.** John Christie's beautiful Opera House at

Glyndebourne, Lewes, in the heart of the Sussex downland. See GLYNDEBOURNE OPERA.

**en route.** A column in *The Stage* newspaper thus headed which gives the whereabouts of all touring companies for the current week and their destination for the following one. Thus: *Kiss Me Kate*: This week, Opera House, Birmingham; next: Pavilion Theatre, Bournemouth. (2) In the general sense, on tour.

**E.N.S.A.** The short title of The Entertainments National Service Association, a British wartime organization for producing plays and concerts for the armed forces of the Crown. E.N.S.A. did a splendid job and found its way into all the theatres of war: in dangerous as well as in safe areas. Few units were unvisited by an E.N.S.A. company.

**ensatainment.** Entertainment provided by E.N.S.A. An infelicitous pun with a pejorative implication. See BASIL DRESS.

**ensemble.** The general PICTURE. The artistes in the setting; the assembled company acknowledging the applause at the end of the play.

**en sourdine.** Music played gently throughout a 'love' or other quiet scene. From the French for muted.

**entr'acte.** An interval between the acts.

**entr'acte music.** Music played during the ACT WAIT.

**entrance.** An old player is seldom said to 'come on' the stage but to 'make an *entrance*'. He usually does this with a flourish and so ensures his welcome ROUND.

**entrance cue.** The lines that bring an artiste on to the stage. Contrast, however, the SILENT CUE, and SIGHT CUE.

**entrechat.** In ballet, a jump in which the feet change position several times, the heels being struck together. From the French *entrechasse*.

**E.P.** Short for experienced playgoer. A hard-boiled member of an audience who is the bugbear of all sensitive artistes. There is no pleasing such people.

**epilogue.** A short poem, or speech, at the end of a play. The Greek *epi*, in addition, *legein*, to speak.

**Equity.** Short for British Actors' Equity Association. See the entry at DAME MAY.

**eternity, Hamlet in its.** See HAMLET IN ITS ETERNITY.

**etiquette.** See STAGE ETIQUETTE.

**exeunt.** Latin for 'they go out', i.e. leave the stage. Cf. EXIT.

## **exeunt omnes**

**exeunt omnes.** The stage direction for 'they *all* go out'.

**exit.** 'He, she or it goes out' (theatrically, off the stage). Too frequently one hears the illiterate usage: 'he exits; she exits'. Latin stage directions were common in the Classical plays.

**exit-cue.** The line that takes an artiste off the stage. See **THAT TAKES ME OFF.**

**exit lights.** See **POLICE LIGHTS.**

**exit line.** An effective line that takes off an artiste and usually earns a **ROUND.**

**extravaganza.** A fantastic musical show. From the Latin *extra*, outside, and *vagari*, to wander. To go beyond the orthodox in dramatic or musical productions.

**eye-black.** Mascara used in stage make-up for darkening eye-lashes. Cf. **HOT-BLACK, SPIT-BLACK, and WATER-BLACK.**

**eyes level with the dress circle, the.** The rule for keeping up the chin and ensuring clarity of speech. There is a tendency with young performers to drop the chin and, in consequence, become inaudible.

## **F**

**Fabulous, the.** The name given to the Sadler's Wells Ballet Company during its successful tour of the United States of America in 1951.

**factory, the.** Artistes' jocular name for the theatre because of the hard work and general drudgery therein. Short for the **FUN FACTORY.**

**fade out.** To dim the lights to a **DEAD BLACK-OUT** Cf. **D.B.O. and CHECK.**

**fake a curtain.** To agitate it so as to give the impression to the audience that it is going up for another call. It renews the applause, and the curtain is thus successfully **PINCHED.**

**fall on one's arse** (of comedians). If every gag fails to raise a laugh, this action will guarantee one.

**false calves.** Leg-padding in an actor's tights to improve the shape. Resorted to by actors in costume plays in which physical defects are mercilessly revealed.

**family box.** A box reserved for family parties.

**family pass.** See **FAMILY TICKET.**

**family ticket.** A free admission pass for the entire family.

## **feel of the house, the**

**fan.** An enthusiast for the theatre or for a particular player. Short for fanatic.

**fan mail.** Letters received by stars from their FANS.

**farce.** Short for farcical comedy, which is played at a quicker tempo and on broader lines than pure comedy. Originally *farce* was that interlude of buffoonery, or patter, 'stuffed in' between the acts of a heavy drama. The French verb *farcir* is to stuff (food), from the Latin *farcire*. Modern farce or broad comedy, is an elaboration of the original sense.

**farquette.** A short farcical sketch as a variety turn.

**farceur.** A jester, a buffoon.

**far gone.** To be 'beyond it'. It is cruelly said of an actor who is becoming too senile for responsible parts. 'So and So is pretty *far gone*, he oughtn't to take these parts, it's pathetic.'

**fat part.** A showy rôle with plenty of *meaty* lines and good opportunities to shine. A leading artiste's dream.

**Father of Vaudeville.** Olivier Basselin (1400-1450) of Vau de Vire in Normandy. See VAUDEVILLE.

**fauteuil.** An armchair. In the plural, the stalls of a theatre (French).

**Federation of Theatrical Unions.** Comprises the three trade unions, Equity, the Musicians' Union, and the National Association of Theatrical and Kine Employers.

**feed or feeder.** A comedian's foil. A butt or general target for his gags. A good foil can do much towards making a comedian's reputation. (2) A cable that takes electric current (i.e. *feeds*) to a fixture. (3) A man operating a carbon arc *feeds* it when he closes the electrodes.

**feel of the house, the.** Within a few minutes of the rise of the curtain a player has what he calls *the feel of the house*. 'The reception of his first lines will indicate sympathy or otherwise, and he will play his part accordingly. An audience is unpredictable; it will eat out of your hand in one town and be inimical, even to freezing point, in another. The reasons are mental, environmental, and sociological. The injudicious booking that takes a smart, sophisticated comedy to an industrial town where people work hard for their living will hardly spell success. A crude comedy or drama played in a fashionable provincial theatre will meet with similar treatment from an insulted audience. Such bookings are inevitable where there is a gap in a tour list and the booking is made as a **FILL-IN DATE**. Even in metropolitan theatres there is this

## **female impersonator**

tendency for audiences to vary in their reactions. 'What are they like tonight?' 'As hard as nails, you'll have to throw it at 'em.' Or the answer may be: 'They are lovely, they'll eat anything.' A player's performance is greatly affected by this *feel of the house*.

**female impersonator.** An actor who portrays woman parts. The term is a clumsy one (contrast MALE IMPERSONATOR). After the first world war an all-male concert party, *Splinters*, became the rage of the English music halls, the 'girls' in the chorus being quite sensational.

**festival theatre.** A theatre devoted to performances of Classical plays or to opera; e.g. the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford-on-Avon, the Glyndebourne Opera House, and the Malvern Theatre (which presented the works of George Bernard Shaw in the summers ).

**Festspielhaus.** A festival playhouse, such as those at Salzburg and Bayreuth, which are associated with performances of Mozart and Wagner operas. From the German.

**festoon.** A border of foliage, flowers, etc., used in woodland scenes.

**festoon curtain.** One that can be looped into single or more folds. It is also known as a SWAG curtain.

**Figaro.** Short for *The Marriage of Figaro*, the favourite Mozart opera, which was first produced in the year 1786. It brought Mozart his first success, after a period of acute financial embarrassment. Yet, such was his generosity and improvidence, that Mozart died in poverty, although he was to make money for others.

**figure, the get-out.** See GET-OUT FIGURE, THE.

**fillet.** The narrow section of the stage floor between the lifts.

**fill-in date.** One taken as a *pis aller* when a company is faced with a WEEK OUT.

**filly.** A member of the dancing troupe, e.g. the Tiller dancing girls. An obsolete Victorian term for a very pretty young girl.

**filter frame.** The frame in front of a magazine compartment into which the GELATINES and FROSTS are fixed.

**finale.** The end of a performance or piece of music. Italian, from the Low Latin *finalis*, the end.

**fine-box.** The forfeit-box kept by the stage manager, who imposes *fines* for unpunctuality or any infringement of theatre discipline, e.g. smoking on the stage at rehearsals, talking loudly in the wings, or generally incurring the censure of the management. The offenders are mulcted of a coin.

**fire commissioner.** The official in charge of the fire regulations governing a theatre.

**fireplace backing.** The conventional backing for a stage fireplace, painted according to the type of grate used in the setting.

**fireproof.** To paint scenery and inflammable furniture, properties, etc., with any efficient fire-proofing solution. It is the law of the land that such fire-proofing be carried out, and the theatre fireman will usually test the scenery by applying a match to the edge of flats. He adjudges scenery to be fireproofed if his match causes a smoulder. Should a flame result, there is a bad time coming for the stage management, which is responsible for fire precautions. Any properties and scenery likely to catch fire must be frequently proofed during the run of a play, for, after a time, the proofing loses its virtue.

**firing step.** A hollowed platform in the FLIES where the slack of the running gear (ropes) is coiled down. As many flymen are ex-sailors the flies resemble the deck of a sailing ship. Cordage is neatly cheesed ('coiled' in landlubber English), rope-ends are whipped to prevent fagging, weak strands are efficiently spliced and a general air of shipshapeness prevails in this department of the theatre.

**first night.** The opening night of a play in the metropolis, or a first night performance anywhere, though one usually associates it with a London production.

**first-night nerves.** Symptoms displayed by all sensitive artistes before the rise of the curtain on a first performance. This feeling is not confined to novices but is common to any player worthy of the name. Some of the greatest actors and actresses suffer agonies of apprehension every time they face a first-night audience. Cf. BUTTERFLIES IN THE STOMACH.

**first-night wreckers.** A gang of thugs who, in the Victorian era, attended first nights with the deliberate intention of 'stopping the show', or, at least, drying-up the cast in any way whatever. They cat-called, shouted insulting remarks (some of which were repeated in the press on the following day, which did more to encourage than to daunt the hooligans) and generally became a serious menace. They were beaten in the end by friends of the managements who mingled in the audience and forcibly ejected them.

**first-nighter.** An enthusiastic playgoer who never misses a first night of a London production. Cf. GALLERY FIRST-NIGHTERS.

## **Firth is my Shepherd, I shall not want**

**Firth is my Shepherd, I shall not want.** An epigram credited to the late Dame Lilian Braithwaite who was so long with the Firth Shepherd management. When asked what she was going to do at the end of the long run of *Arsenic and Old Lace* she replied, 'Firth is my Shepherd, I shall not want.'

**fish and actors.** The contemptuous observation made by railway porters at Crewe (or any other big railway junction) when they see a carriage and truck drawn into a siding. There are few travellers on a Sunday and the traffic through the junction is mostly freighters or slow trains containing theatrical touring companies and fish trucks. Hence the term *fish and actors* (in order of importance). 'What's in Number Nine platform, 'Arry?' 'Only fish and actors.'

**fish-and-chip tour.** A tour of the small dates (the Number Threes) on a small salary, just enough to enable the players to support life on a diet of fish and chipped potatoes. The term is a jocular prolepsis, for such engagements often turn out far better than anticipated. 'I've just been offered a *fish and chip tour* for the Spring.' Cf. WOOLWORTH CIRCUIT.

**fit-up.** A portable theatre that is fitted-up on the village green or fair ground. Known as booth theatres or one-night stands, they were quite common at the turn of the century, but few are seen today.

**fit-up actor.** One playing in such a theatre.

**fit-ups.** Small DATES where booths are fitted-up for from one to three nights. Cf. ONE NIGHT STAND.

**five and nine.** The Number Five and Number Nine sticks of grease paint which used to be the standard foundation for a male make-up. Cf. FOUNDATION.

**five minutes, please!** The call made *five minutes* before OVERTURE AND BEGINNERS.

**five positions in ballet dancing.** Those basic positions of a ballet dancer's feet from which movements start and in which they end.

**fix digs.** To obtain apartments in a town. 'Have you *fixed digs* for Blackpool next week?' As a rule theatrical landladies 'write in' to a local stage manager, who places their communications on the Call Board inside the stage-door. These letters arrive at the beginning of the week and they state what accommodation is available and the terms. Players who have not already 'fixed' can answer such letters as seem reasonable. As a rule such bookings

are satisfactory, the 'dud' apartments being reported to the stage manager, who places them on his black list. There is an official lodgings list provided by Actors' Equity. See also PRO DIGS.

**flash powder.** A chemical substance through which is passed an electric current producing a flash and a cloud of smoke. Used for explosive effects in war plays.

**flat.** A canvas-fronted unit of scenery some eighteen feet high by six feet wide. The vertical sides are called stiles and the cross pieces, set in toggles, the rails. A foot or so from the top of each stile are cleats, and sashes, by means of which flats are joined together to form a setting. When cleated together, the lines are made fast to the tie-off screw. To reinforce a setting, braces are fixed behind the flats. (2) Slang for a bad actor. He is as wooden and inanimate as a *flat*. (3) A listless performance of a play.

**flat, door.** A *door-flat* has an opening to take a door-frame.

**flat, French.** A large folding flat that, when battened out, forms the back piece of a box-set. This unit can be flown and dropped when needed. Cf. TWO/THREE-FOLD FLAT.

**flat, two/three-fold.** Flats hinged together which can be used either to form the back of a setting or as a backing piece.

**flat-man.** A scene-shifter, a grip hand. He runs the flats during the act changes (American).

**flat marking.** Stencilling markings on the canvas at the back of the flats to facilitate packing: e.g., 'P.S.I.' (Prompt side, Act I), 'O.P. 3, 2.' (O.P. side, Act III, scene ii.). Flats thus marked can be stacked at the sides of the stage and easily run on to form the settings.

**flat, window.** A flat with an opening to take a window-piece.

**flesh diversion.** An underdressed revue or cabaret. A LEG SHOW.

**flesh pedlar.** A theatrical agent. He deals in 'bodies' (i.e. actors and actresses).

**flea pit.** A small, or very old theatre reputed to be verminous. Quite often, however, the term is libellous. It is probably a theatre that has lost popularity owing to the building of a larger house in the vicinity and has, in consequence, become a second-rate date. Cf. BUG HOLE.

**flies.** Platforms which run from the proscenium arch to the back wall of the stage. Here the flymen work on the ropes to hoist or lower the battens, and the stage curtain. In old theatres there is

**flies, come down from the**

only one platform, usually on the prompt side. (2) In America, the WINGS.

**flies, come down from the.** See COME DOWN FROM THE FLIES.

**flippers.** Small flats of scenery that are hinged on each side of the setting on a revolving stage as fill-in pieces connecting the set to the false proscenium and are folded back on to the stage before revolving.

**float spot.** A spotlight used in the footlights.

**floats.** Footlights. Originally these were wicks that *floated* in a trough of tallow.

**flock.** A group of people on the stage. Part of a CROWD.

**flogger.** Canvas strip tied to a pole for dusting flats before painting (scenic artist's term).

**flood-bar.** Has the same function as a SPOT BAR.

**floor-mopper.** An acrobatic dancer.

**floor-stands.** Telescopic stands for spot- and floodlights. They are from five to seven feet in height. Tripod stands are also used.

**flounce.** A line of black painted on the edge of the lower eyelid which helps to accentuate the eye in the glare of the stage lighting. Originally a 'society' term, it was adopted by the theatre with the flounce itself.

**fluff.** To forget, or stumble over, lines. The term is said to originate in the story of an actor who, after vainly trying to attract the attention of the prompter, called off-stage: 'Major MacFluff, where the devil's Major Macfluff!' One waits for a prompt, and *fluffs* while one waits. Cf. PONG.

**fluffy.** Uncertain of one's lines. Anything but DEAD LETTER-PERFECT.

**Flute, The.** The Mozart opera *Die Zauberflöte* (The Magic Flute), produced in 1797 and still a favourite with opera lovers. (Opera artistes' abbreviation.)

**fly.** To hoist out of sight unwanted borders or cloths.

**fly-ladders.** Ladders on each side of the stage, behind the proscenium, by which the men reach the fly-platforms. Cf. CATWALK.

**flyman, head.** The 'leading hand' in charge of the flymen.

**flymen.** Men who work in the flies raising and lowering the battens which support cloths and borders and, when not counter-weighted, the stage curtain.

**fly-plugs.** Light DIRS situated in the fly-floor and used for auxiliary overhead lighting.

**fly posting.** The illicit posting of playbills, or other advertising

matter. It used to be the practice in the days when fit-up companies flourished. Either from the slang sense of *fly*, 'artful', or the literal sense of leaping (flying) over fences to stick bills on barn walls or out-houses. More probably, however, it may be the pasting of a *fly-sheet* (poster) in any conspicuous position where such advertising is forbidden.

**fly-rail.** The wooden rail that runs along the fly-gallery on which the ropes are made fast to the cleats.

**flyings.** Cloths and borders, ceilings, flats, etc., that are fliable.

**foliage border.**—WOOD BORDER.

**F.O.H. manager.** Front of House manager. The ACTING MANAGER whose job is in front of the curtain as opposed to the stage manager whose concern is BACKSTAGE.

**F.O.H. staff.** Front of House workers, e.g. box-office keepers, bar tenders, programme sellers, ushers, doormen, linkmen and others who work on the auditorium side of the curtain. As distinct from the BACKSTAGE STAFF.

**fold up** (of a production). To end its run. From the folding up of a marquee theatre after a ONE-NIGHT STAND

**folk play.** A Medieval play produced at village festivals. The custom of presenting these has fallen into desuetude in recent years but there were signs of a revival during the Festival of Britain.

**follow.** To keep an artiste under a spotlight. (A music-hall technicality.)

**following.** A faithful audience. 'The show will do well with Henson in the lead, he has a big FOLLOWING.'

**foot a flat.** To lift a flat that is lying on the stage, one man places his foot on the bottom rail whilst his mate lifts the top and 'walks his hands' until the flat is upright and can be run either into the desired position on the stage or into the scene dock. Cf. WALK HANDS.

**footlight Fanny.** A chorus girl who, in the back row, thrusts herself to the front.

**footlight favourite.** A popular player or music-hall entertainer. (Obsolete.)

**footlight well.** The narrow trough in front of the stage into which the light compartments are fitted.

**footlights.** The row of *lights* at the *foot* of the stage. They are set in compartments which have reflectors. The front of the compartment contains a colour-frame set in a groove so that GELA-

## foot-music

TINE filters, or mediums can be fixed according to the colours required by the lighting plot. The footlights are wired in circuits, and a different colour can be used for each circuit if necessary. They can also be dimmed independently or controlled from the DELI-BOARD.

**foot-music.** The rhythm of tap-dancing.

**foots.** Short for footlights. Cf. FLOATS.

**footstool.** A comfort feature provided by luxury theatres—especially festival opera houses, where the performances involve sitting for some hours. Made of soft rubber, footstools are a boon to patrons.

**Forces' sweetheart, the.** Vera Lynn, the British vaudeville and radio singer, was a great favourite with the troops in the second world war, hence the sobriquet. Miss Lynn travelled extensively in the war zones at home and abroad, and never let the troops down when a concert had been promised to them.

**fore stage.** That portion of the stage which juts out beyond the proscenium arch. Cf. APRON, and BLACK.

**fork.** The U-shaped bracket that supports a lantern. It can be tilted at any angle. Cf. TRUNNION.

**Fortuny.** An Italian system of lighting (*circa* 1902) by which light is thrown upon coloured silks which reflect it on to a 'sky-dome' and thence to the stage. Named after the inventor, the Italian designer, Mariano Fortuny.

**forty-two weeks in the year.** In the 'good old days' when, before the advent of the 'talkies', touring companies could rely upon forty-two weeks' work in the year.

**forfeit-box.** See FINE-BOX.

**Forum, the.** The local name for the Town Hall in the city of Birmingham. Concerts are frequently held there, and the local people are extremely jealous of this term. 'Earl Granville, who was received with most enthusiastic cheers, said: "I rise a stranger in this famous Town Hall . . ." (cries of "No!") . . . "Known in Birmingham, I believe, by a still more classical name".' (The Bright celebration, Birmingham, in June 1882, quoted by J. Redding Ware.)

**fouetté.** A ballet movement consisting of the turn on one leg and a whipping movement of the other. A *multiple fouetté* is a quick repetition of the movement.

**foul.** A tangled fly rope. 'Drop your long line, it's *fouled* the batten.' The line is lowered and cleared. The term is borrowed from

## **front-cloth**

nautical speech, as are many used by the backstage staff. Ex-seamen seem attracted by the work on the fly platform, where their knowledge of marline-spike work and rope-splicing is invaluable.

**fourth wall.** The space formed by the proscenium arch through which the audience sees the performance. In a BOX SET the back piece and side flats form the other three walls.

**foyer.** The promenading space in the hall of the theatre. From the French for hearth or home.

**frame-cloth.** A cloth stretched on wood. Cf. PAINT FRAME.

**freakery.** A 'freak' or acrobatic show in vaudeville or on a fair-ground.

**free admission.** The complimentary seats granted by the courtesy of the house to members of the theatrical profession and to people who advertise the fare. Cf. COMPLIMENTARIES and FREE LIST.

**free list.** FREE ADMISSION.

**free list entirely suspended.** When the business is unusually good and the advance bookings preclusive of complimentary tickets, a notice is often displayed saying: 'Free List entirely suspended.'

**French brace.** A right-angled, triangular brace attached to a flat or a screen. A specially constructed metal weight keeps the brace in position. •

**French curtains.** Fully-swagged curtains.

**French's edition.** The printed 'acting' version of an established success. Such plays are printed with the full stage directions, scene, property, and lighting plots as used in the metropolitan production. They are published by Samuel French, Limited, 26 Southampton Street, London, W.C.2.

**French flat.** A folding flat.

**French tabs.** French *tableau* curtains, which draw right across the stage from left to right. Also known as TRAVELLER CURTAINS.

**fret.** See PROFILE.

**from the front.** The audience's point of view. For instance, a 'tired' suit may look extremely smart *from the front* of the house. A speck of dirt on an evening shirt may not be noticed. There is a regrettable tendency in lazy players to rely too much on this, and inexcusably 'tatty' garments have been inflicted on the public in provincial towns by repertory artistes.

**front-cloth.** A painted cloth, a street scene, garden scene, or any

## **front cloth scene**

appropriate picture before which a scene is played while the next act is being set behind it. Often in spectacular dramas the scene was played 'broad' to disguise the bumps and thuds made by the scene-shifters behind the cloth. Cf. CARPENTER SCENE.

**front cloth scene.** See DROP SCENE.

**front, in.** In the audience; in front of the curtain. 'I hear Noël Coward is *in front* tonight, so watch your step.'

**front of curtain call.** An acknowledgment of the applause taken in front of the TABS, either by a single artiste or by the entire company.

**front of the house.** Anywhere in front of the proscenium, the auditorium, foyer, bars, offices, etc. Contrast BACKSTAGE.

**front of the house manager.** See ACTING MANAGER. Cf. RESIDENT MANAGER.

**front piece.** A piece of false hair stuck on to cover the forehead from which the natural hair has receded, thus giving the effect of youth. Cf. TOUPEE.

**frost.** A square of frosted gelatine which is placed in front of a naked lamp to diffuse the light. 'Frosts soften light and help to eliminate shadows. (2) (Of a play) a failure—cf. FLOP.

**frou-frou.** The short ballet skirt said to have been originally designed by the great Camargo in 1721. The skirt was shortened to enable dancers to jump and beat. Cf. TUTU.

**full set.** One occupying the entire stage and thus leaving little space at the back for artistes to cross or the staff to stack furniture or flats.

**full up** (of lights). Every light on the plot brought in at cue. '*Full up* floats, battens, and spot barrel, perches, and wall sconces.'

**full West End cast.** The often mendacious billing of a touring cast. Cf. ALL BROADWAY CAST.

**fun factory.** See FACTORY.

**funny man.** A comedian, a term that refers mainly to musical comedy or vaudeville. Cf. COMIC.

**funology.** Comic entertainment. On the analogy of LEGOLOGY (American).

**funster.** A variant of FUNNY MAN. Cf. GAGSTER.

**furor.** A frenzy of enthusiastic cheering at the end of a play that has gone well. 'What a *furor* there was on the first night of *Oklahoma*.'

**fusible link.** 'A connection that, at high temperatures, melts and

causes a skylight to open and creates an outward draught on the stage in case of fire.' (R. Gillespie Williams: *The Technique of Stage Lighting*).

**fustian.** The florid, bombastic, ranting style of play associated with melodrama and fit-ups at the beginning of the present century. This form of drama has virtually ceased to exist although the writer remembers seeing a ludicrous and sorry performance in a hall in a picturesque Devonshire village, just before the second world war. Perhaps a few of these companies remain. John Drummond, the novelist, writes amusingly on these companies in *Playing to the Gods*, a book worth the attention of all theatre lovers.

## G

**gaff.** An old term for a portable theatre. The name was given to the first Drury Lane Theatre, which was erected on the site of a cock-pit, the gaff being the iron hook with which the cocks were goaded to fight. *Penny gaff* is pejorative for a fit-up or any other cheap theatre: from the original price of admission.

**gaffer.** A stage 'old man', especially a country yokel. *Gaffer* is rural English dialect for any old man. Probably it is a contraction of 'grandfather'. (2) An actor who plays in the PENNY-GAFFS, or any fit-up.

**Gaff Street.** Shaftesbury Avenue, London, or any street containing a number of theatres.

**gag.** An impromptu line, or a piece of business, introduced by a player with the object of raising a laugh or generally brightening a dull part without altering the sense of the lines. From the slang term meaning imposture, a hoax, joke, comic effect generally, the word may have some relationship with the German *geck*, a fool, from which the Scottish dialectal *gegg*, a simpleton, may be derived. (2) To substitute lines for those one forgets when one dries up, or to fill in an awkward pause when a fellow artiste has missed an entrance cue.

**gag show.** A crude play having a sketchy plot but no written dialogue. This is provided (i.e. *gagged*) by the members of the company. Usually the leading man has a number of long 'set' speeches round which the plot is written and the cast back him up, or 'fill in' his breathing pauses.

## **gagster**

**gagster.** One addicted to the introduction of comic business or, in his own opinion, amusing lines.

**Gaiety girls.** Members of the famous George Edwardes's choruses at the Gaiety Theatre, London, in the gay '90's. Many of these girls married into the peerage.

**gala performance.** (Usually) the last performance of a seaside Concert Party. The stage and auditorium are decorated and an *en fête* atmosphere prevails.

**gallery.** The highest and, therefore, the cheapest, seating in the auditorium. In many of the old theatres the seating is extremely uncomfortable, for it consists of long backless forms.

**gallery check.** A metal disc given to patrons in return for payment at the gallery pay-box. It is handed to the attendant at the door upstairs and returned for *checking* next morning at the box-office.

**gallery first-nighters.** An association of ardent theatre lovers who attend all first nights and sit in the gallery.

**gallery-line.** A strong, sentimental line, pitched in a key likely to reach the back of the gallery and so call forth a round of applause.

**gallery, play to the.** Act 'broad'. To be quite blatant in courting the favour of the GALLERYITES. (Drama actors and music hall artistes' technique.)

**galleryites.** Patrons of the gallery. A loyal, if sometimes noisy, class.

**Gang Show.** This, now famous, British Boy Scout revue is a feature of the London theatre. It was instituted by Ralph Reader, a brilliant producer who writes the 'book' and composes the music. The productions are elaborately and expensively staged, and the cast numbers from 100 to 150 boys. There is a freshness and originality about these *Gang Shows* that ensure full houses during the fortnight's run. The performance at the King's Theatre, Hammersmith—the first since the war—packed the theatre at every performance, and the teen-age House of Commons sketch will be long remembered. In this production 2,500 costumes were worn in the various scenes.

**garden-cloth.** A painted cloth representing a garden scene. Used for such plays as Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or as an exterior backing for french windows of a country house. It can also be a CUT-CLOTH in front of a cyclorama.

**Garden, the.** Short for the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, the home of Grand Opera. This theatre was built in the year 1858 on a site occupied by a theatre since 1733.

**Garden Party, the.** The annual theatrical garden party given by members of the Profession to help swell the funds of theatrical charities.

**garland.** A border or festoon of foliage, or of artificial flowers.

**gate money.** That taken at the box-office for any one performance (touring actors' colloquial).

**gauze cloth.** A net cloth of very fine mesh used for special stage effects. A *gauze* can be plain or painted and, when lit from the front, it gives an illusion of solidity. If lit from behind it is transparent and reveals the setting behind the cloth.

**G.B.S.** The initials of George Bernard Shaw, the Irish playwright, dramatic and music critic, Socialist and wit. His early writing career was hard going, five novels being rejected in four years, though they were all published after he became famous. As literary and art critic, he did work that had a sting that quickly caught the attention of the *cognoscenti*, and his music criticism, written under the pseudonym *Corno de Bassetto*, was of a stimulating trenchancy. A member of the Fabian Society, Shaw wrote propagandist tracts and was a fervent speaker in the cause. His success, however, began with the publication of *The Perfect Wagnerite* and *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*. Shaw plays, with their brilliant and provocative prefaces on social, religious, and biological themes, became the rage. *Mrs Warren's Profession* (1893) was banned on the grounds of immorality until 1902, when its production caused a sensation and gave food for much thought. *Candida* was successfully produced in January, 1894, but his great success was the 1902 production of *Man and Superman*, after which any play by G.B.S. was assured of success. *Pygmalion* was the first play in which the adjective 'bloody' was spoken on the stage (cf. NOT PYGMALION LIKELY), and what a sensation Mrs Patrick Campbell caused when she said it! Perhaps Shaw's greatest plays were *Back to Methuselah* and *St Joan*. Most brilliant was *The Apple Cart*, a satire on dictatorship, which was produced.

George Bernard Shaw lived to the age of 93 and, but for the accident that hastened his end, he might have attained his century.

**gelatines.** Colour 'mediums' in frames that slide over footlight compartments, or compartment battens, to diffuse light. As supplied by the Strand Electrical & Engineering Company, Ltd, London, the colours are numbered as follows: *White* No. 30, clear; No. 31, light frost; No. 29, heavy frost. *Yellow* No. 50, pale

## **gellies**

yellow; No. 1, yellow. *Amber* No. 3, straw; No. 2, light amber; No. 4, medium amber; No. 33, deep amber; No. 8, salmon. *Orange* No. 5, orange; No. 5a, deep orange. *Pink*. No. 51, gold tint; No. 52, pale gold; No. 53, pale salmon; No. 9, middle salmon; No. 7, light rose; No. 54, pale rose; No. 36, pale lavender (also known as 'surprise pink'); No. 10, middle rose; No. 11, dark pink; No. 12, deep rose; No. 13, magenta. *Red* No. 6, primary red; No. 14, ruby; No. 26, mauve; No. 25, purple. *Blue*. No. 17, steel blue; No. 40, light blue; No. 18, middle blue; No. 32, medium blue; No. 19, dark blue; No. 20, primary blue; No. 15, peacock blue; No. 16, blue-green. *Green*. No. 21, pea-green; No. 22, moss green; No. 23, light green; No. 39, primary green; No. 24, dark green. *Neutral* No. 55, chocolate tint; No. 56, pale chocolate; No. 60, pale grey.

The Central Lighting Company, Inc., of U.S.A. produce 100 tints of which the following numbers are obtainable: 0, clear; 1, frost; 2, light flesh pink; 3, flesh pink; 4, medium pink; 5, pink; 6, rose pink; 7, dark rose pink; 8, deep pink; 9, du Barry pink; 10, light magenta; 11, medium magenta; 12, dark magenta; 13, rose; 14, rose purple; 15, dark rose purple; 16, violet; 17, special lavender; 18, medium lavender; 19, dark lavender; 20, light purple; 21, purple; 22, royal purple; 23, medium purple; 24, dark purple; 25, daylight blue; 26, light sky blue; 27, light blue; 28, light navy blue; 29, special steel blue; 30, light blue special; 31, medium sky blue; 32, medium blue special; 33, medium blue; 34, medium navy blue; 35, dark sky blue; 36, non-fade blue; 37, dark blue; 38, dark navy blue; 39, urban blue; 40, light green blue; 41, moonlight blue; 42, Nile blue; 43, light blue-green; 44, medium blue-green; 45, blue-green; 46, dark blue-green; 47, light green; 48, medium green; 49, dark green; 50, light lemon; 51, medium lemon; 52, dark lemon; 53, very light straw; 54, light straw; 55, medium straw; 56, dark straw; 57, light amber; 58, medium amber; 59, amber; 60, dark amber; 61, orange; 62, light scarlet; 63, special light rose; 64, light red; 65, medium scarlet; 66, pink red; 67, fine red; 68, pure red; 69, pure chocolate; 70, chocolate; 75, grey; 80, variegated; 90, variegated; 95, variegated; 100, rainbow.

**gellies** (pronounced *jellies*). Short for GELATINES.

**general understudy.** An actor or actress engaged to COVER most parts in the play.

**gentlemen supers.** See WALKING GENTLEMEN.

**gentlemen ushers.** Men of good appearance and deportment who act as STEWARDS at a festival Opera House or at a similar theatrical function.

**George.** The traditional nickname for the stage-door keeper.

**George Spelvin.** The American WALTER PLINGE, and of equally obscure ancestry. Spelvin has the distinction—unique, I imagine—of playing 210 parts (20,000 performances) in a period of three years. (This information is owed to a correspondent in *John o' London's Weekly*.) Exhaustive research, however, has failed to trace the birth of Spelvin (or Plinge) as a programme name. It has been said that the original George Spelvin was an actor member of Lamb's Club in New York, but no confirmation has been obtained of this.

**Georgian.** Plays of that period of theatrical history.

**Gerald.** The late Sir Gerald du Maurier, actor and producer. He was the son of George du Maurier (1834-1896), the pictorial satirist of *Punch*, and author and illustrator of the famous novel *Trilby* which was successfully made into a play and provided, in *Svengali*, one of the finest acting parts for a leading man. Sir Gerald du Maurier was a master of modern stage technique. His polish, timing, and zest in his work made him the most popular figure on the English stage. His superb performance in *Diplomacy* was one of the finest pieces of acting of the century. But Sir Gerald will best be remembered for his portrayal of the leading characters in 'thick ear' plays during the 1920's, his most famous part being that of Drummond in Sapper's play *Bulldog Drummond*. Du Maurier was very popular in his profession and he treated stars and stage hands with equal courtesy. *Gerald, a Biography* was written by his daughter Daphne, the popular novelist.

**gesture.** See CHIRONOMY.

**get a headache.** See CATCH A COLD.

**get in.** To get into the cast of a Town production. Also, in a general sense, to get into the right theatrical circles and so become known to influential people who can 'pull strings' with managements. Cf. RING, THE.

**get-in, bad.** An awkwardly situated scene-dock whose doors are at right-angles to, say, a narrow passage. It means that the scene shifters have to make a tortuous journey and take twice as long to dock the flats and baggage.

## **get-in, good**

**get-in, good.** A *good get-in* is a theatre whose dock doors are in such a position as to make it easy for the scene shifters to run pieces of scenery into the scene dock from the lorry. (Touring carpenters' term.)

**get out.** The ability to leave a town with all expenses paid. In the old days of dubious managements it used often to be a serious problem how a company would *get out* (of the town) after a week's poor business. And it often fell to the cast to accept part salaries in the hope that the money would be made up in the following week. The term is still used jocularly in the modern theatre when the house is thin. 'Do you think we shall *get out* this week?'

**get-out figure.** The weekly running cost of a touring show. The term had its origin in the figure needed at the box office to enable a company to leave the town without surrendering their baskets and properties.

**get out on.** Applied to the landlady's bill. 'What did you *get out on*, last week?' (Touring artistes'.)

**gibus.** A collapsible opera-hat, worn with a tuxedo dinner jacket) but *never* with tails. It is named after the inventor.

**Gillivan.** A Gilbert and Sullivan opera. An American contraction.

**gin Annie.** An inveterate first-nighter who sits in the queue waiting for the gallery doors to open, fortifying herself with a bottle of gin, and vigorously gives her opinion of the performance at the final curtain.

**girls, the.** Chorus girls in a musical play or a pantomime. Cf. LINE, THE.

**ghost walked yet?, has the.** There being, as a rule, no set time for payment of salaries, this is a stock question in the theatre on Friday. In some theatres, however, there is a TREASURY CALL, the time being stated on the call board. See the entry at TREASURY.

**ghost walks on Friday, the.** In the theatre TREASURY (pay day) is on Friday, and this catch-phrase has been used for at least a century and has spread to other professions. According to Charles Earle Funk (*A Hog on Ice*) it is credited to an actor who, in *Hamlet*, had the part of the ghost of Hamlet's father. 'According to the story, when Hamlet spoke the lines, "I will watch tonight, perchance t'will walk again", the actor playing the ghost, off stage, shouted back, "I'll be damned if he will unless our salaries are paid".'

## Glyndebourne Opera House

**give cards.** See GIVE THE TICKET.

**give it a drink.** A cat-call of disapproval directed at a bad singer, or actor.

**give me the last line.** A request from an artiste at rehearsal who has not heard his CUE LINE of the last speech.

**give the ticket** (of managers). To sack an artiste (American). Compare the English *give cards* (i.e. the unemployment and National Health cards which are held by an employer).

**glam.** Short for *glamour*. Hence, *glam up*, a variant of 'tart up', to dress up with the object of impressing managers or agents. (Chorus girls' slang.)

**glass crash.** A bucket of broken glass emptied into an empty one makes a startlingly realistic crash. It is used in farces when the comedian is supposed to have fallen through the roof of the greenhouse when escaping out of the bedroom window. Cf. CHINA CRASH.

**glass slipper.** In the pantomime *Cinderella*, the story of which came to us from the French, an error in translation made the slipper glass, *verre*, whereas the slipper was described as *pantoufle en vair*, a slipper made of fur.

**glaze.** To 'size' a newly painted cloth or scene to remove the 'new look' of the paint.

**glissade.** A sliding step in ballet. From the French *glisser*, to slide.

**gloomy Dane.** The part of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. Cf. MOODY DANE.

**Glyndebourne box.** The guest box at the Glyndebourne Opera House.

**Glyndebourne Opera House.** The unique theatre adjoining *Glyndebourne*, the home of Mr and Mrs John Christie, near Lewes, Sussex. Now in the twelfth year it has regained something of the pre-war glamour which characterized the festivals of Mozart under the brilliant management of Rudolf Bing, the artistic direction of Carl Ebert, and the conductorship of the late Fritz Busch. Those who remember the pre-war Glyndebourne will regret the passing of many personalities at these superb performances. During the war years Glyndebourne was closed, but reopened with a season of Benjamin Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* given by the British Opera Group, followed by a further season, and the production of Britten's *Albert Herring*, and several performances of the exquisite *Orfeo* by Gluck, the first hint of a return to the old régime of classical opera.

## Glyndebourne silence

Economic difficulties and a return to austerity, again closed the Glyndebourne Opera for two years, during which plans were made to revive—when possible—the festivals of Mozart on pre-war lines. In the Opera House reopened, with performances staged in the grand manner, and that pleasant institution, the Glyndebourne dinner, was revived. Glyndebourne lovers will miss the debonair figure of Mr Rudolf Bing, who resigned his management to take over the Metropolitan Opera House, New York.

**Glyndebourne silence.** Corresponds to the BAYREUTH HUSH.

**go.** To be successful (of a play): 'The show didn't *go* too well last week, but you'll have a more intelligent crowd in front at this place.' 'We'll have to alter this scene, it doesn't *go* well.'

**go back on.** Repeat speeches at rehearsal. '*Go back on* those lines, Mr Plinge, I can't hear you from where I'm standing. Speak up, please!'

**go behind.** To *go behind* the scenes. Visit friends on the stage. Cf. **go ROUND**.

**go for.** To criticize; attack in the newspapers; disparage; generally to SLATE a performance or player. 'The critics *went for* the show bald-headed.' (Perhaps originally an American term.)

**go into black face.** To play the part of Othello. 'I have done everything but *Othello*, and I have no burning desire to *go into black face* and have the stage stolen from me by some young and brilliant Iago.' A confession of Sir Laurence Olivier quoted in Milton Shulman's *How to Become a Celebrity* (Reinhardt & Evans).

In general application, to play the part of a nigger minstrel in a concert party or in a music-hall act.

**go off.** To leave the stage at the end of a scene, or to make an exit. Cf. **COME ON**.

**go on for.** Play the part one is understudying. 'You will have to *go on for George* tonight. Melville has the 'flu.'

**go over big.** Make a hit; to delight an audience by brilliant acting, singing, or dancing. Cf. **SMASH HIT** and **wow**.

**go over bits.** To rehearse scraps of dialogue that are apt to cause confusion in a performance. Repetitive cues and the like. The 'tricky' monosyllabic speeches that so often trip one up.

**go round.** To visit an artiste in the dressing-room. The visitor *goes round* to the stage-door from the front of the house. 'Come round after the show, my dear.' Cf. **PASS DOOR**.

## grand drapery

**go up on one's lines.** To DRY UP, BALLOON, OR MAKE AN ASCENSION (American).

**God bless you both!** The ironic aside (*sotto voce*) when a 'thin' laugh greets a comedian's best gag. Cf. IT MUST BE THE LANDLADY.

**gods, the.** The gallery of the theatre, the Olympian heights. 'The place was full, we couldn't even find standing room in the *gods*.'

**gods, play to the.** Play to the gallery.

**going up!** The final warning from the stage manager that he is about to ring up the curtain. Cf. PLACES, PLEASE.

**goldfish.** To make a pretence of singing by *mouthng* sounds in the manner of a goldfish in a bowl. 'If you can't sing, goldfish, it'll look the same from the front.' (Music halls.) Cf. MUSSITATE.

**gold programme.** The much coveted gilt programme presented to guests at the Glyndebourne Opera at the first two festivals.

**gone dollars, the.** A parody on the title of the Gilbert and Sullivan opera *The Gondoliers*. It was coined by John Stetson, the American producer, who put on the opera at a Chicago theatre where it did very poor business. He changed the theatre billing to *The Gone Dollars*, in rueful reference to his losses over the production, and, according to legend, the show began to do well.

**good/bad house.** A good (i.e., large), or bad (i.e., small), theatre audience.

**good curtain.** The ending of a scene or act that has good lines, or a situation that evokes applause.

**good rough actor.** An artiste, who, thoroughly competent, lacks polish and finesse.

**goose.** To give the BIRD, to hiss in the manner of a goose; hence *gooser*, a poor play that gets hissed off the stage.

**goose, get the.** To receive the BIRD.

**gram.** Short for *radiogram*, or *panatrope*, whereon sound effects are produced, or which may be used in a small theatre, in place of an orchestra.

**grand** (of artistes). Rather UP-STAGE; conceited as a result of a minor success. 'So and So has become rather *grand* since he had that notice in the *Telegraph*.' 'She's too *grand* to know any of her old friends since she got into Town.'

**grande dame part.** That of a lady of rank and bearing. e.g. the traditional stage duchess.

**grand drapery.** Velvets at the top and sides of the stage. The top part is known as the TEASER, the side parts as TORMENTORS.

## Grand Guignol

**Grand Guignol.** Blood-curdling, one-act dramas full of horror and sensationalism. They are an elaboration of the French puppet drama in which Guignol was the principal character. The *Grand Guignol* plays were started in Paris in 1897. There was a season of these dramas at the Little Theatre, Adelphi, London, in the 1920's.

**grand old man of the stage.** Several popular artistes have had the title bestowed upon them, those in the present century being the late George Arliss, and Cyril Maude, both beloved in their profession, and C. Aubrey Smith, the stage and film star.

**grand opera.** Essentially a tragic opera that has no spoken dialogue.

**grave trap.** The trap-door on the stage that is used for the *graveyard* scene in *Hamlet*, and also for the entrance of the Demon King in pantomime.

**G-string.** A minute piece of covering worn about the loins of some showgirls in musicals and revues. It can easily be likened to the G-string of a violin.

**gravy.** Easy laughs from a friendly audience. (2) Good lines, or business, in a farce or a comedy.

**grease.** Any grease-paint foundation, or remover. Examples: Boot's theatrical cold cream; cocoa (or cacao) butter; and Trex, a kind of lard which, before the war of 1939-45, was popular with repertory actors.

**grease ball.** An artiste who uses an inordinate amount of powder to tone down a heavy (grease-paint) make-up. (Adopted from America.)

**grease-paint.** A composition made up in jars, or sticks, and used for making-up the face. It is manufactured by several firms, the best known being Leichner. The tints are numbered and the commonest are: No. 1½, a light flesh; 2½, blondish flesh used as a foundation by fair women; 3, medium flesh for juvenile make-up; 3½, dark, almost brown-pink, principally used for blending with other tints; 5, pale to yellowish which, with 3 (for women) and 5 (for men), is used as a foundation or, alone, for 'character' or middle-aged parts; 8, an ochreish tint for 'orientals'; 9 is seldom used singly but, with 5 for a male *straight* make-up; 10, white, for highlights, and lining. Other sticks used for a variety of make-ups are *liners* (blue, black, brown and lake), carmines, and chrome. An excellent book on the art of make-up is Yoti Lane's *Stage Make-up* (Hutchinson's Technical Library, London). (2) Generic

## **green, red and cerise**

for actors and actresses. 'There seems to be a lot of *grease-paint* in front this afternoon.' Cf. **PROS.**

**grease rag.** A cloth used for removing grease-paint.

**Grease-Paint Avenue.** Brixton, a suburb of London, noted for theatrical lodgings. The abode of music-hall artistes.

**grease-paint, the smell of.** Has an overpowering attraction for actors, especially those who are out of work. The phrase connotes that nostalgia for the stage felt by all who have worn make-up and acted on the professional stage. Cf. **ONCE AN ACTOR, ALWAYS AN ACTOR.**

**great B.P.** The great British Public, as fickle as any public in the world.

**great divider.** Wrinkles. Cf. **CLAPHAM JUNCTION.**

**great profiles.** Those of the late Rudolf Valentino, the film actor; John Barrymore, the Broadway star; and Ivor Novello, the English musical comedy star, composer, and impresario.

**greedy.** Artistes are said to be greedy when they seek the centre of the stage, or generally draw attention to themselves by such actions as killing fellow artiste's laughs, or masking them so that all the limelight is on themselves. Cf. **STAGE HOG**, and **LIMELIGHT HOG.**

**green, the.** The stage. 'How long have you been on *the green*?' (i.e. in the profession). Of the many suggested origins the claim to simple rhyming slang is the most legitimate: greengage = stage. The term is a very old one, used mostly by **VAUDEVILLIANS.**

**green card.** An identity-card, having the photograph and relevant details, held by a member of **E.N.S.A.** during the second world war. It enabled an artiste to move in 'closed' areas where entertainments were given to the troops. It also exempted the owners from other forms of national service to which they would otherwise have been directed.

**green fat.** Jokes and good lines, with comic business, in an actor's part. Cf. **GRAVY.**

**green lime, please!** A melodrama villain indicated his diabolical intentions in the light of a green lime. At rehearsals when mouth-ing his lines he used to remind the stage manager that he would require the green limelight in that speech, 'on the night'. The phrase *green lime, please!* is sometimes murmured today when a line savours of melodrama.

**green rag.** The stage curtain. Cf. **GREEN** and **RAG.** (Music halls.)

**green, red and cerise.** The colour design in the tie worn by

## **green room**

members of the Green Room Club. The colours were suggested by the initials G.R.C.

**green room.** A retiring, or waiting, room at the side of the stage.

At one time green rooms were fairly common, but few remain today. There is one at the Theatre Royal, Bath, and a very superior one at the Glyndebourne Opera House, and at one or two London theatres.

**Green Room Club.** A theatrical club in the West End of London; the leading members of the profession belong to it.

**green room gossip.** STAGE GOSSIP.

**Green Room rag.** A Sunday evening performance given once a year in aid of charity. Organized by the Green Room Club.

**green room talk.** See GREEN ROOM GOSSIP, THEATRICAL SHOP.

**Grey Lady, the.** The ghost that is said to haunt the backstage of the Theatre Royal, York. See HAUNTED THEATRES.

**grimacery.** A slang term for facial expression.

**grip-hand.** An American STAGE-HAND. He *grips* the flats.

**grips.** Short for the preceding.

**grommet** or **grummet.** A length of sash-line attached to the top of a cloth to which working lines are made fast.

**gross.** The *gross* receipts of a performance include all advance bookings and box-office takings. 'What did we do *gross*, tonight?'

**ground rent.** Is payable to owners of the 'ground on which a portable theatre, or tent, is erected.

**ground-row.** A piece of scenery representing a bank of grass, a hedge, a low wall, or anything required by the nature of the setting. (2) A row of lights on a batten that illuminates the foot of a back-cloth, or any cloth that needs lighting. (3) A light-trough mounted on a trolley, having the same function as sense. (2) The trough can also be used vertically to light wings or backings.

**group.** To form supers into symmetrical groups for a stage picture, or to form an effective crowd in a spectacular drama. (2) An assembly so arranged.

**grummet.** See GROMMET.

**guests.** The patrons of the Glyndebourne Opera whose attendance is regarded as a visit to the house as much as it is to the theatre which adjoins it, so delightful is the atmosphere of this gracious place.

**guide lines.** The two perpendicular steel *lines* that, behind the proscenium, guide the curtain up and down.

## H

**habit, the theatre.** That of regular playgoing. 'The Joneses seem to have the *theatre habit* this year, they are always gadding somewhere.'

**hack.** A play doctor hired by a repertory company to lick poor plays into actable shape. (Obsolete.)

**half-crown brigade.** Out-of-work actors who, meeting more prosperous friends and acquaintances, try to borrow *half-crowns* from them 'for old times' sake'. Cf. TOUCHER.

**half, the.** The call made by the call-boy half-an-hour before the overture. 'Has the *half* been called?' Cf. FIVE MINUTES, OVERTURE AND BEGINNERS, and QUARTER.

**half up.** Lights checked to half power. When the light plot orders *half up* it usually means that at a cue (say, the switching on of a lamp) the lights will come to FULL UP.

**halls, the.** The vaudeville theatres, as opposed to legitimate houses. Short for *music halls*. Hence, *on the halls*, acting as a variety artiste.

**ham.** Short for 'ham-fatter'. An inferior actor; hence *hambone*, an amateur actor. Barnstorming actors used ham fat as make-up base or remover. \*Of American origin.

**hamartia.** The element in a tragic character that causes his misfortune. The Greek meaning is 'error' or 'sin' and Aristotle held that it was this moral flaw in the character that made the ideal tragic hero: 'a man pre-eminently virtuous and just whose misfortune is brought upon him not by vice or depravity but by some error (*hamartia*).' *Poetics II*.

**Hamlet in its eternity.** Actors' jocular phrase descriptive of a performance of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in its *entirety*. It goes on for ever.

**hand props.** Any properties that the artiste carries with him on to the stage. They are usually placed on a STAND-BY TABLE in the wings near the entrance. Literally properties that are *handled*, as distinct from ornamental props, such as vases, pictures, curtains, etc.

**handline.** Any rope used for hauling, or lowering, a curtain, cloth, border, etc.

**hands.** Applause. The *clapping* of the audience's *hands*. Cf. ROUND.

## **hardened artery**

**hardened artery.** Broadway, New York, where theatres often have hard-boiled audiences.

**hardy perennials.** The evergreen Christmas pantomimes, or favourite farces, children's plays, and the like. e.g. *Peter Pan*, *Treasure Island*, *Toad of Toad Hall*, *Where the Rainbow Ends*, *Charley's Aunt*, etc. Their popularity never wanes.

**Harlequin.** The principal character in the pantomime *harlequinade*. He is the servant of *Pantaloon* and in love with *Columbine*, to whom alone he is visible, as is she to all but he. Harlequin, who wears a parti-coloured costume and a black mask, carries a wand with which he frustrates all interferers with his designs. The name derives from the Low Latin *Harlequinus*, a demon, whence the Italian *arlecchino* (Dante has *Alichino*). Joseph T. Shipley, in his erudite and illuminating *Dictionary of Word Origins* (Philosophical Library Inc., New York.), suggests Old High German *Erle*, a sprite, plus *König*, king: *harlequin*, king of the sprites.

**harlequinade.** An old pantomime feature that is seldom seen in modern performances of pantomime. It was a madcap affair between Harlequin, Columbine, and Pantaloon.

**harmonica.** Mouth-organ. A modern application of a term that was coined (according to the Anglo-American philologist, the late Logan Pearsall Smith) by Benjamin Franklin, the American statesman and inventor (1706-1790). Perhaps the greatest exponent of the modern harmonica is Larry Adler, who was born in Baltimore in 1914 and won a prize, in his 'teens, for harmonica-playing. He appeared in the Cochran revue, *Streamline*, in London at the Palace Theatre and was a tremendous sensation.

Adler remained in England for a number of years, touring the country in vaudeville, then toured the Colonies. His playing on the harmonica of the oboe part in Mozart's Oboe Quartette, and, with a violinist, Bach's Concerto in D Minor, are remarkable. The original sense of *harmonica*, as coined by Benjamin Franklin, was a 'musical glass'.

**has-been.** A supernumerary who might well retort to his detractors 'that it is better to be a *has-been* than a never-was'. A critic, reviewing a revival of a play by Bernard Shaw—a noted vegetarian—punned: 'Mr Shaw no longer lives on beans, but has-beens.'

**haunted theatres.** Several playhouses are said to possess ghosts. At the Theatre Royal, York, a theatre built on the site of a monastery,

the wraith of a nun appears at intervals. Courageous artistes have remained in the theatre all night in the hope of seeing the *Grey Lady*, as she is known to the stage staff. Though nobody seems to have actually seen this spectre the legend remains. Several London theatres, notably the Adelphi (see **ADELPHI DRAMA**) and His Majesty's Theatre, are credited with ghosts. The National Theatre in West 415th Street, New York, is said to possess several spectres of past members of the theatrical profession who have appeared at that theatre.

**have line, to.** To possess a graceful figure. Applied to actresses in musical comedy of the George Edwardes era. (Obsolete.)

**have the needle.** To suffer from stage fright, which often produces that unpleasant and extremely uncomfortable—and irritating—sensation known as 'pins and needles'.

**have you fixed?** This question may mean 'have you fixed an engagement?' or 'Have you fixed digs?' (touring artistes).

**he, or she, couldn't touch the part.** The part is beyond the player's ability. 'It was a fine part, but he couldn't *touch* it.'

**heavies.** **HEAVY PARTS.**

**heavy father.** The unforgiving father of the erring daughter whom he turns out of doors 'to bear her shame' alone. A 'Roman' father of the Victorian era.

**heavy man.** An actor who is cast for 'the villain of the piece' in melodrama.

**heavy merchant.** Heavy man.

**heavy part.** A stage villain, or a dramatic rôle in a modern play.

**heavy woman.** Plays parts similar to those portrayed by the heavy man. The villainess, or 'siren' part.

**heavies.** Heavy parts.

**hick.** Connotes rurality. Hence a *hick audience*, a simple, unsophisticated, country crowd. The derivation is obscure unless it is a shortening of *pohickery*, a native Virginian name of the 17th century, which sense is suggested by Ernest Weekley. But compare Eric Partridge, *A Dictionary of Slang*.

**hide away.** The American version of a **HIT-UP**. A date hidden away **IN THE LONG GRASS**.

**high kick.** A frill and limb-revealing kick in, say, the **CAN-CAN** dance or the **LINE DANCER** in a revue or cabaret.

**highlight.** A leading rôle that stands out above the rest of the characters. (2) To give prominence to an artiste in the billing or

## **high part, the**

newspaper publicity matter, the build-up of a show, or of an individual artiste. 'In spite of the *highlighting* the piece flopped.'

(2) In make-up, to accentuate cheekbones and other features and effectively contrast the shades on the face.

**high part, the.** The gallery, or upper circle (Irish theatres).

**High Priest of Music.** The 'maestro of maestros', Arturo Toscanini, who was for many years conductor of the National Broadcasting Company's orchestra of New York. He achieved fame overnight, at the age of 19, when he deputized for a conductor in Brazil. From that time Toscanini has been a public favourite. He conducted at the La Scala Opera House, Milan, and at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York. A dynamic and despotic conductor, Toscanini's word is law and musicians all over the world testify to the feeling of terror under his baton. Nevertheless to have been conducted by the maestro is regarded as a badge of honour.

**Hipp.** Short for the London Hippodrome, Leicester Square, W.C.2.

**Hippodrome corner.** That corner of Leicester Square where it meets Charing Cross Road. Cf. POVERTY CORNER.

**hit.** A success achieved by a play, or the personal triumph of a player. Hence, SMASH HIT, a FURORE. The applause *hits* the roof, or *knocks* the audience. Cf. KNOCK 'EM.

**hit the nut.** To do good business; (of an artiste) to be successful. From the hitting of a coconut on the fairground.

**hit the tanks.** Tour the American small towns.

**hog the stage.** See STEAL THE LIMELIGHT.

**hokum.** Comic business that never fails to get over; sensational lines. A trashy plot, melodramatic situations, etc. *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Supplement) suggests a telescoping of *hocus-pocus*. Perhaps rather the 'Latin' neuter of *hocus* (short for *hocus-pocus*). It is American theatre slang.

**hold (a scene).** To keep the stage position at the end of a scene, or act, in order to take a picture-call. (2) Hold an audience, to keep their attention. Also (of a scene) 'You can play it broad enough, it'll *hold*.'

**hold the book.** To take the prompt script at rehearsals, or act as prompter during a performance. Cf. TAKE THE CORNER.

**holdover.** A play that runs a second, or third, week at a provincial theatre. It is *held over* the period called for. Of American origin.

**home from home.** An actor's expression for some of the digs in

## **house, front of the**

which he stays when touring the country. Originally the meaning was literal, now it is mostly jocular and rueful. Theatrical landladies, when advertising their apartments, used to add: 'every home comfort' or 'a home from home'. Cf. QUOTH THE RAVEN.

**Home of Variety.** The slogan of the London Palladium, Oxford Street.

**honey.** A *sweetie* (short for sweetie-pie), a popular person in the theatre or anywhere. 'Isn't James Mason (James Steward, David Niven or any other player popular with the women) a *honey*?' It is also said of a part: 'I have a *honey* of a part in next week's show' (Repertory artiste).

**hooper.** A stage dancer; hence a *hooper act*, a dancing turn, and *hoopers*, a dancing troupe.

**horizontal floods.** Are used for lighting the CYCLORAMA.

**horizontal line of sight.** This is usually marked on the stage, and the setting made accordingly. But where no line is shown a careful check has to be made from the stalls and dress circle, especially from the side seats.

**horn tower.** A portable tower containing a loud-speaker unit.

**hot-black.** An eye-lash cosmetic that has to be heated to produce the EYE-BLACK. A taper, or candle, is used for this purpose.

**hot spot.** A bright spot in an area of uneven lighting.

**house.** Audience. 'What sort of house did you have last night?' (2) The auditorium. (3) The theatre. Cf. DRAMA HOUSE.

**house!** Short for 'house-lights', the order from the stage manager to the electrician to black out the house just before the curtain goes up, and to bring the lights up at the end of an act when the curtain falls. In most theatres, however, there is a bell that communicates, from the prompt corner, with the electricians' perch.

**house author.** A PLAY DOCTOR, a playwright employed by a theatre to supply plays or adaptations for presentation in the programme provided by the management. The term is obsolete but was common enough when stock companies flourished at the end of the last century.

**house lights.** All lights in front of the curtain which are dimmed out during a performance, except those made obligatory by law, such as exit lights over doors, etc.

**house, front of the.** Any part of the theatre in front of the curtain.

## house full

**house full.** The notice outside a theatre when all seats are sold, and there is not even STANDING ROOM.

**'house full' boards.** Are placed outside a theatre when seats are SOLD OUT.

**house seats.** Free seats given by COURTESY OF THE HOUSE.

**hunch.** To dance (on the stage). From the hunched-backed technique of eccentric dancers, or the standard English sense of the verb, to arch, bend, or form a hump.

# I

**Iago.** A crafty, deceitful type of person. From the name of the archetype in *Othello*. (Obsolete.) Cf. JOSEPH SURFACE.

**Ibsenity.** Lines reminiscent of those in Henrik Ibsen's morbid plays.

**I had 'em in the aisles.** See AISLES.

**I knew it in the bath.** An actor's jocular lament when he dries up at rehearsals. Like so many stage catch-phrases, it is probably true.

**illegitimate laughter.** That which is not called for by the lines or the situation. It is evoked by the overacting of a tense scene or by out-moded dialogue. In *King Richard the Third*, the solemn line 'Bring in the bier' invariably caused a titter. As one of the bearers, the writer took this laugh as an entrance cue. Any reference to *beer* is a sure laugh in the English theatre. In a recent revival of Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*, in London, the *illegitimate laughter* was extremely embarrassing though the performance of Jean Forbes Robertson as Hedda was superb. It was just that the 'gloom' was too much for the modern sense of humour to endure. People do not indulge in gloom for its own sake nowadays. But the plays of Ibsen and Strindberg have always caused this out-of-place laughter. Cf. IBSENITY.

**impersonate.** To portray a character on the stage. See CREATE.

**impresario.** A promoter of the higher forms of entertainment, particularly opera or musical plays. He organizes production, discovers talent wherever it may be, and generally works 'for the good of the cause'. Frequently he is manager of an important theatre. A model impresario is the brilliant and internationally famous Rudolf Bing of the Metropolitan Opera House, New

**interchangeable rep.**

York, and late of the GLYNDEBOURNE OPERA. From the Italian *impresa*, undertaking, enterprise.

**impromptu.** Extemporaneous lines or business interpolated when an actor has DRIED UP or a play needs broader technique to get it over to a dull-witted audience. Gagged lines, or an unexpected curtain speech demanded by an enthusiastic audience. The leading player speaks without preparation. In the days of the 'gag-shows', and more demonstrative audiences at melodramas, impromptu speeches had no terror for the performers who more often than not gave impromptu performances. See GAG-SHOW.

**improvise.** See PONG and VAMP.

**inaudient** (of audiences). Those who refuse to listen to the words of a bad play and simply BARRACK or CAT-CALL.

**in character.** Appropriate to the play and period. Free from ANACHRONISMS.

**independent switch.** One operated on its own. A 'practical' switch worked by an artiste on the setting, as distinct from one that is operated from the electrician's perch, off stage. See PRACTICAL.

**independents.** Light circuits that, by virtue of their functions in the play, have to be operated *independently* of the main lighting group, blackout, and other controls. Each is connected to a separate board.

**ingénue.** The female JUVENILE LEAD; in the days of melodrama she was known as 'the singing chambermaid'. An old story credited to John Stetson, the American theatre manager, and quoted by the author of *Humour in the Theatre*, which must be known to all 'pros', is that of his retort to his stage manager of whom he had enquired about the progress of a juvenile girl he had engaged for his company. 'I think she is a perfect *ingénue*, sir,' answered the S.M. 'Oh, is she? Then call a rehearsal tomorrow morning and tell her about it.'

**soubrette jeune premier.** Cf. SOUBRETTE and JEUNE PREMIER.

**in production** (of a play). *In* rehearsal and general preparation for *production*. A DARK theatre sometimes has a notice stating that 'this theatre is closed; a new play is *in production*'.

**inset scene.** A small setting inside a large one. It is often 'flown away' at the end of the scene, and dropped for a later one.

**interchangeable rep.** The system of putting on plays for a fortnight instead of a week. It is common where repertory companies are playing in adjacent towns or suburbs, the companies playing

## **intermission**

on the football system of 'home, and away'. They produce two plays, and change theatres at the end of the weeks' run. Thus, the artistes have a fortnight's rehearsal for each play.

**intermission.** Interval, hence INTERMISSION MUSIC for ENTR'ACTE MUSIC.

**interpret.** To create a part. To interpret the author's 'message' through the portrayal of the character. The term refers to leading rôles.

**Interval Club.** A theatrical, residential and social club at 22 Dean Street, Soho, London. It was formed to provide meals and rest for artistes during *intervals* in rehearsals or performances. The residential address is at 1 Soho Square, London, W.1.

**interval music.** The same as ENTR'ACTE MUSIC.

**intimate revue.** A smart, topical revue played in a small (*intimate*) theatre.

**in Town.** Acting in a metropolitan theatre. 'Did she play the part *in town* or was she engaged for the tour only?'

**in the long grass.** Touring the small-town dates which are very much off the beaten track. 'We have been *in the long grass* all the summer.' Adopted from the American theatre.

**intrigue.** The intricacies or machinations in the plot of a drama. From the Latin *intricare*, to entangle, perplex.

**in vaudeville.** The American equivalent of being ON THE HALLS.

**iron's down, the.** Becoming obsolete, this catch-phrase means a bad or unresponsive audience. When the *iron* safety curtain is lowered the audience cannot be heard on the stage.

**is it my turn to utter?** An exaggeratedly comical catch-phrase meaning 'do I speak next?' it is usually said of one who has not been paying attention at rehearsals and is caught 'off'.

**Italian nightingale, the.** The late Angelica Catalini. Cf. SWEDISH NIGHTINGALE.

**it dries me up!** Said of anything that deprives the hearer of speech. It corresponds to 'I give up!'; 'It beats me!' To be too exasperated or annoyed for words. 'It *dries me up* when I think of the terms he offered for the part.'

**it must be the landlady!** An ironical catch-phrase used by actors receiving faint applause on a line that usually gets a good hand. (Touring artistes'.) Cf. GOD BLESS YOU BOTH.

**it'll be all right on the night.** This reassuring phrase from an inveterate forgetter of lines has become a theatrical gag. Experi-

ence, however, proves that what goes persistently wrong at rehearsals seldom is *all right on the night*.

**it'll look well on the train call!** In the days when the Sunday trains were full of touring companies and changes *en route* were frequent, the parading of golf clubs, the carrying of fur-collared overcoats, etc., gave an air of opulence to the company, and a harp, displayed on the station platform, by a musician, set a hall-mark on a musical comedy troupe. This catch-phrase greeted any request to tour an awkward piece of luggage. 'It'll look all right on the train call, I suppose.'

**it's dead!** The applause has died down.

**it wasn't there.** A reproof addressed to a stage manager who PINCHES a curtain call on a dead house. The applause wasn't there.

**it will hold.** A producer's phrase addressed to an artiste who feels that he has made too lengthy a pause in the dialogue. It means that the audience will not become restive because of it.

## J

**Jack's come home.** A theatrical lodging house. (Australian actors'.)

An adoption of the nautical 'Jack's come home from sea, anything'll do for him.' The reference is to indifferent rooms.

**Jasper.** The traditional name for the villain of the piece in melodrama.

**jell.** Short for *jellup*, solidify, jellify, hence to get over, to establish one's personality. (Of a play) to catch on, settle down to a long run. 'The show was well cast and mounted, magnificently acted, yet it didn't *jell*.'

**jelly on the ash-can.** A *gelatine* filter medium placed in front of a footlight compartment frame. (Electricians'.)

**jeune premier.** The leading juvenile part. The JUVENILE LEAD.

**Joey.** The traditional nickname for a clown in pantomime. It commemorates Joseph Grimaldi (1779-1837), the greatest clown in the annals of the stage. Son of Giuseppe Grimaldi, a dancer and one-time ballet master to David Garrick at Drury Lane Theatre, the boy's childhood was far from happy, for his father was severe to the point of cruelty. Indeed, so ill-tempered was he that his fellow artistes nicknamed him *grim-all-day*. From the age of two,

when little Joey made his first public appearance, he accompanied his father on tour and appeared as the cat in pantomime at Drury Lane in 1783, nearly losing his life when he fell down a stage trap on to the stone floor of the cellar thirty feet beneath. This was followed by an equally narrow, and miraculous, escape when, while he was playing the part of a monkey, the chain, with which his father swung him round the stage, snapped, hurling young Joey across the footlights to land—luckily for him—on to an obese and shock-absorbing gentleman in the pit-stalls. Grimaldi's apprenticeship was hard and penurious, but his talent obtained him pretty regular employment at Drury Lane and the Sadler's Wells theatres. He worked hard and, even at that age, he showed the originality and initiative that were to prove him later to be the greatest artist in his line.

At the age of nineteen he married the daughter of one of the proprietors of Sadler's Wells. But poor Joey was destined to be a real life *Punchinello*, for, within a year of his marriage, his young wife died, and for some time he despaired of his reason. The only thing that kept him sane was his work to which he devoted his mind and energy. His supreme artistry won him the acclaim of London and the provinces. Charles Dickens gave an enthusiastic account of the clown and houses were full at every performance. In spite of the fame his work brought him, Grimaldi's life was one of sorrow and trouble and before he reached his fiftieth year he was stricken with an illness that made him a permanent cripple and he was obliged to retire from the stage.

Joseph Grimaldi—a name that is still revered—did not live long in retirement and his life came to an end in May, 1837.

**jog.** A narrow flat used to give an illusion of depth to a wall or to any other piece of scenery.

**jogar.** A street-singer, or queue entertainer. From the Italian verb *giocare* to play, jest, entertain generally. Cf. **BUSKER**.

**John Audley.** Used in phrases connoting 'to conclude', 'bring (a performance) to a close'. The term dates from the eighteenth century. A manager of a touring company, named Shuter (an appropriate name indeed!) used to spin out a performance until an audience sufficient to fill the theatre for a 'second house' had gathered, then someone in front of the house would call out: 'Is John Audley there?', whereupon the show ended abruptly. Hence, 'to come the *John Audley*' was to 'pull a fast one'. Lord John

Audley was sentenced to death for cheating in 1631. Another version of the term is that John Audley was a showman and this signal 'Is John Audley there?' was given by the doorman to indicate that there were enough people outside the theatre to fill the house a second time, and the first house ended. In the days of gag shows the performances *could* end any time.

**John Scarper.** The act of doing a SCARPER. To leave theatrical apartments without paying the landlady's bill. See PARLYAREE.

**Johnny in the stalls.** Like the STAGE-DOOR JOHNNY he haunts theatres where there are plenty of showgirls. (Obsolete.) See STAGE-DOOR JOHNNY.

**join.** Where the flats meet when cleated together. *Joins* have to be carefully watched as occasionally frames warp through damp, or long storage, and do not join closely. This causes a slight gap through which backing lights are apt to show. (2) Where a wig joins the forehead. Cf. BAD JOIN.

**joint.** An engagement of a husband and his wife on a *joint* salary. 'We have just fixed a *joint* in concert party.' They receive one pay packet.

**Jonah.** A player who is certain to bring bad luck to a play or to members of the company.

**Joseph Surface.** The name applied to a hypocrite. From that arch hypocrite, Joseph Surface in Richard Brinsley Sheridan's play *The School for Scandal* (1777). 'He is a proper *Joseph Surface*; I wouldn't trust him if I were you.' (Old actors', seldom heard in this sense today.) Cf. IAGO.

**jump a rail.** To place an additional rail on a flat to carry an electrical fitting.

**jump lines.** To speak several lines ahead, thus causing momentary—if not acute—embarrassment to one's fellow artistes. A jump often occurs when cues are very much alike, though it happens more in repertory performances than in a 'run' of a play. And, the jump having been made, it is very difficult to go back, especially if it is a big leap ahead. A jump can also cut out an important ENTRANCE CUE.

**juice.** Electricity. 'These floods simply eat the *juice*.' (Electricians'.)

**juvenile.** Short for JUVENILE LEAD.

**juvenile business.** The portrayal of juvenile parts. A *juvenile* means any age from callow youth to near-forty, and is usually applied to 'lovers' or to the dashing heroes of 'hearty' drama.

## **juvenile John**

**juvenile John.** The nickname for any juvenile lead. Cf. *INGÉNUË*.

**juvenile lead.** A player of standard 'young man' parts.

**juvenile troupe.** Children engaged as dancers for a Christmas pantomime.

# K

**Kapellmeister.** The conductor of an opera orchestra. The literal translation of the German word is 'master of the chapel'.

**kathakali.** Dance drama in the theatre of India.

**keep it clean!** A comedian with a tendency to 'crack *BLUE GAGS*' is so enjoined, when a theatre audience in a residential district is likely to take offence.

**keep it down!** A request from the stage manager to artistes who raise their voices in conversation off-stage when the curtain is up and there is danger of being heard on the stage and of distracting the players.

**keep that in . . . and at the *matinée*!** This greets the introduction of any felicitous gag, or business that amused the company at rehearsals or was tried out during a performance. The rider is employed if the gag is exceptionally brilliant. Contrast *THAT'S OUT*.

**keep to the script.** To speak according to the book and not introduce extraneous matter for the sake of laughs or effect. To give the exact cues.

**Kenny B.** The affectionate nickname bestowed on Sir Kenneth Barnes by students of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, Gower Street, London, of which Sir Kenneth is President. See *R.A.D.A.* and *P.R.A.D.A.*

**kid show.** A performance in which children predominate.

**kill a baby.** To cut out a *baby* spotlight from the lighting plot.

**kill a laugh.** To start a fresh line before the laugh evoked by the preceding one has died down. Often this is deliberately done when an actor has been instructed to speed up playing-time.

**kill a round.** To deprive a fellow artiste of a well deserved *ROUND* of applause by speaking on top of the line that earned it. This is not often done, though a case of extreme professional jealousy, or spite, has been known to kill applause.

**kill a shadow.** To soften a hard line of spotlight by frosting it or by

introducing a floodlight which has much the same effect. See FROST.

**killing line.** A comedy line (speech) that makes the audience 'nearly die with laughing'. (Victorian.)

**Kings, the.** The *King's* Theatre, anywhere. In London, however, it means the King's Theatre, Hammersmith.

**Kirby flying system, the.** A system of weights, pulleys, and ropes invented by one named Kirby, to give the illusion of flying. The player is suspended by piano wire of very high tensile strength attached to a specially constructed safety harness.

**klunk.** To fall heavily on the boards of the stage. (2) (Of takings) to FLOP. (Echoic of a thud.)

**knife.** To cut a play. To excise lines that might offend, or to reduce playing-time for a twice-nightly performance. 'You surely aren't going to *knife* my part?' 'My dear fellow, I'm going to *carve* it!' The term is obsolescent, but was common in the Victorian era when tedious 'wordy' plays were the rule.

**knitting.** See SUPERSTITIONS.

**knock-about act.** A tumbling turn or a rough burlesque. The artistes *knock* each other *about* during their act.

**knock-about drolls.** See KNOCK-ABOUT COMEDIANS, ATHLETIC DROLLS. Funny acrobats.

**knock 'em.** A music-hall, and Cockney term for winning an audience. The performance *knocks them* silly. From that great little comedian, Albert Chevalier's famous song: 'Knocked 'em in the Old Kent Road'.

## L

**lace.** To bring two flats together by lacing the sash-line through a number of screw-eyes in the stiles of the flats. This method is adopted where there is a bad join and where the flats require a stronger lashing than the orthodox method of cleating.

**laddy!** The OLD PROS' mode of address: '*Laddy*, when I was with Irving at the Lyceum . . .' In the present century 'Old boy' has superseded 'laddy!' Cf. ACTOR LADDY.

**lake-liner.** The lake-coloured lining-stick used to indicate age-lines in character-old man parts. (*Lake*: a crimson pigment.)

**Lancashire comic.** The Lancashire comedian, who predominates

## **land a spot**

in English touring revues that work the North Country dates. Their broad humour, accents, and esoteric gags would be lost on most southern audiences, although many such revues appear in this region. But it is in his own territory that the Lancashire comic is most successful.

**land a spot.** Obtain an engagement. To land a *spot* of work. Adopted from the United States. Cf. **SHOP**.

**land of promise.** Hollywood, the goal of the ambitious, and frequently disappointed, stage artiste. Although a number of front-rank players are successful in their break into pictures, many fall by the wayside.

**Lane, the.** The famous Drury Lane Theatre, London, built in 1663 and rebuilt in 1812. Its history has been admirably written by that thorough historian of the English theatre, W. Macqueen Pope, who is affectionately known in the Profession as 'Popey'.

**lantern.** A construction similar to a small greenhouse built on top of all stages. In case of fire a rope is cut with an axe (on the stage) which sets a system of weights into operation to open all the windows in the lantern, thus forming a flue, the outside air drawing flames on to the stage from the auditorium.

**lapse of time curtain.** The lowering of the stage curtain for a second or two to denote the passage of time in the action of a play. The house-lights remain dim.

**lapsus memoriae.** A DRY-UP. Literally, a lapse of memory (on the stage).

**Larry.** The pet-name of Sir Laurence Olivier, the English stage and film star.

**La Scala.** The famous Opera House in Milan, the mecca of Italian opera. Here the performances have a finesse and an amplitude that pale emulative productions into insignificance. Toscanini, Bruno Walter, Felix Weingartner and other leading conductors have reigned during the opera seasons here. The operas of Verdi and Puccini are notable performances at La Scala: and those fortunate enough to hear them in pre-war seasons are unlikely to forget the experience.

**last call, take one's.** To die. (Old actors'.) 'I'll soon be taking my *last call*, laddy!'

**last line.** TAG. See GIVE ME THE LAST LINE.

**last minstrel of the English stage.** The dramatist James Shirley (1596-1666). He was a prolific writer, and his most successful

plays were: *The Brothers*, *The Wedding*, *The Lady of Pleasure*, *The Cardinal*, and *The Traitor*. With the suppression of the theatre, in 1642, James Shirley's fortunes were broken.

**late-comers.** 'Those unpunctual and exasperating people whose entrance into the stalls and circle, after the rise of the curtain, is as distracting as it is insulting, to the artistes on the stage. This discourtesy cannot exist at operatic performances, since such people are not admitted into the auditorium once the curtain has gone up on a scene.

**lattices.** The upper boxes that are in line with the gallery.

**laugh-line.** A good comedy line that never fails to get its laugh.

**laughter assignment.** A comedy part (American).

**laughter emporium.** The American version of the English FUN FACTORY.

**lay the skid.** To wreck a player's lines, or business, by cutting in before the speech, or business, is over, thus killing whatever laughter there might be. An act of professional jealousy. The agent of this nefarious business lays the grease on which his victim slips . . . *skids*.

**lead, play the.** Have the leading rôle. Cf. NAME PART and TITLE RÔLE.

**lead, the.** The star part. The plural is employed when male and female *leads* are of equal importance.

**leads, first, second, third.** The grades of leading parts. Cf. SUBSIDIARY PART.

**leading business.** Leading parts. An artiste advertising for work in a theatrical newspaper often insists on *leading business only*.

**leading lady.** She who plays the principal part.

**leading light.** The star artiste in an opera, musical comedy, or play. His name leads the rest in the sky-sign.

**leading man.** The male star-lead, or other leading part.

**left.** In a stage direction, means the left-hand side of the stage facing the audience. The actor's left. In most theatres this is on the PROMPT SIDE.

**leg curtain.** Is used to MASK the side of the stage.

**legit.** Short for '*legitimate stage*'. The orthodox theatre, as opposed to a music hall.

**leg mania.** Stage dancing. (Applied to stage-struck girls who long to be dancers.)

**leg-tosser.** A dancer in a stage troupe. Cf. LINE DANCER and TORSO-TOSSER.

## legology

**legology.** The science of stage dancing. (American.) On the analogy of FUNOLOGY, sexology, etc.

**Leichner stick.** A stick of grease paint manufactured by the firm of Leichner, Ltd. of Acre Lane, Brixton, London, S.W.2. Leichner is a favourite in the make-up box.

**leitmotiv or leitmotif.** The leading motive that recurs throughout an opera or a musical play. It is associated with the leading character, or symbolizes the theme. The German *Leitmotiv*, leading motive. Cf. THEME SONG.

**length.** A number of lamps fixed on a short wooden batten used to light a backing or a set behind a ground-row, to illumine the bottom of a cloth. For lighting door-backings the length is hung on the frame of a flat.

**les points.** The tip of a ballet dancer's toes.

**letty** (usually in the plural). Lodgings, especially theatrical apartments. The term is obsolete and is a survival of the 'rogues and vagabonds' period of theatrical history and derives from the Italian *letto*, a bed, plural *letti*.

**lever de rideau.** A curtain raiser, a one-acter. (French.)

**lift.** To plagiarize, either lines from another play, or an artiste's line of business. The material is *lifted* out of a work without permission of the holder of copyright.

**light and shade.** The niceties of intonation, inflection, modulation, etc., in the reading of a part.

**light check.** A dimming of lights. Do not confuse with *check lights* (to a prescribed degree, on resistance).

**light comedian.** A LIGHT COMEDY actor. One who portrays light-hearted young men in such comedies.

**light comedy.** Stands between HIGH COMEDY and FARCE.

**light comedy merchant.** Light comedian. He *sells* comedy.

**light rehearsal.** This, under the direction of the stage director, drills the electrician and his staff in the running of the lighting plot. Cues, checks, and dims are tried out, and all off-stage lighting is correctly positioned. Often such rehearsals take hours, especially in musicals and pantomimes. (2) A *light* RUN THROUGH.

**light relief.** Cf. COMIC RELIEF.

**light run through.** A purely WORD-REHEARSAL, no stress being laid on lines or acting.

**lightning call** (usually in the plural). Rapid curtain calls taken by a greedy leading artiste, an inveterate pincher. Cf. PINCH CALLS.

**lightning-change artiste.** The (more usual) QUICK-CHANGE ARTISTE, one who imitates (takes off) a number of well-known personalities. Bransby Williams, the English actor, assumed several Dickensian characters in his PROTEAN act on the music-hall stage.

**lightning sticks.** A primitive but most effective method of creating the effect of lightning: two metal sticks (with insulated handles) connected directly across the main electricity supply that spark brilliantly when touched together.

**lights, put up.** To bring up the house lights on the fall of the curtain in an interval, or at the end of the play.

**lime juice.** The limelight. Lime light provided by the *juice* (current) of the electricity.

**limelight, fond of.** Greedy for notice. One who claims the centre of the stage. 'She is pretty good at her job, but rather too *fond of the limelight*.'

**limelight man.** Is in charge of the limes, and carbon arch projectors. He adjusts the carbon rods and generally regulates the feeding of the arc.

**limes.** Short for limelights.

**limited run.** A play—often a revival—that is put on for a specified number of weeks as a fill-in when a theatre has a new play in production. 'They are putting on *Journey's End* for a *limited run*.' Cf. SEASON.

**line dancers.** Stage dancers (e.g. the Tiller troupe or the Jackson girls) who dance in a *line* in musical shows.

**line, have.** See HAVE LINE.

**line of sight.** A line taken from any angle in the auditorium that will ensure unobstructed vision. Scenes must be set within these lines of sight and it is necessary to see that borders are not too low to obscure vision from the gallery. See HORIZONTAL, and VERTICAL, lines of sight.

**line, please!** A request for a prompt. It is far better to ask boldly for this than to flounder, and thus embarrass the other artistes in the scene. If the man on the book is attending to his job he will see that the line is given before the request for it is necessary.

**lines.** Dialogue; one's part. (2) Ropes that support battens on which the cloths and borders, flats, etc., are tied. (3) The thin 'signal halliard' lines on flats which are frapped and cleated when setting scenery.

## **lines, set of**

**lines, set of.** The three lines (short, long, and centre line) that support a batten. 'Send down a set of lines for this cloth' (the stage carpenter to the flyman).

**linnet.** A little BIRD, or faint noises of disapproval in the auditorium. The first flutterings of the BIRD.

**linty.** A sprite. Like the 'gremlin' of second world war coinage, it is blamed for any untoward happening in the theatre. From the Scottish *lintie*, a pet name for a linnet, a bird regarded as unlucky.

**liquid board.** A liquid-dimmer control board. See, the general entry at DIMMER.

**literary play.** One that reads better than it acts. Usually an adaptation of a wordy novel, having little action to redeem it from flatness.

**litho.** A double-crown lithographic picture of a salient point in a play; used for advertisement display.

**littera canina, or dog's letter.** A trilled *R* which sounds somewhat like the growl of a dog.

**little Willie.** The pathetic child character in Mrs Henry Wood's sentimental play *East Lynne*. It is an axiom in the theatrical profession that a man cannot call himself an actor unless he has played this part as a boy. See DEAD! DEAD! AND NEVER CALLED ME MOTHER!

**live.** Electrical equipment that is connected to the main switch-board or, indeed, to any switchboard. Cf. AEIVE.

**live show.** An interlude, short sketch, or variety act, given between films at a cinema. A personal, rather than a celluloid appearance.

**live stage.** A stage that is set, and lit, ready for the curtain to go up on the performance. A 'dead stage' is one that is either in complete darkness, or lit by a pilot light.

**live a part.** To have complete absorption in it. To *be* the character portrayed.

**lodging list.** A list of the addresses of theatrical landladies in London and the provincial towns, compiled for the convenience of members of British Actors' Equity Association. These apartments have been recommended by artistes themselves and submitted to the editors of the list. It is, therefore, very reliable.

**loge.** A box, or stall, in the theatre. From the French.

**logical accent.** That which is placed upon the significant words in a player's lines. The stresses that appear natural and logical.

**London Player's Guild.** That society of London-theatre understudies and small-part players which produces 'Sunday shows'

as a means of introducing talent to managements. To quote the prospectus, the Society was formed 'for the purpose of bringing to the notice of managements, in particular, and the public, in general, under studies and small-part players, unknown in London.'

**long-arm.** A long wooden pole used for clearing borders and ceilings, that foul the lines in the flies. Cf. **CLEARING STICK** and **WOODEN ARM.**

**long carry or long hump.** An expression used when the distance from the scene-dock doors to the nearest point where a lorry can pull up is a long one, and all scenery has to be carried (*humped*) by hand. (Stage carpenters' and stage hands'.)

**long hump.** See preceding entry.

**longueur.** A period of dullness in a play; 'longiloquence'. (French.)

**look at the house.** It is considered unlucky for an artiste to look through the curtain at the audience.

**lounge suit opera.** The 'musical drama' (the Broadway phrase) entitled *The Consul*, by Jean Carlo Menotti, which ran for a year in New York and was brilliantly performed by Patricia Newsy and ten supporting artistes. Set in a dictator state, the action takes place in the Consul's office and tells of a woman's attempt to obtain a visa to go to another country. She fails, and commits suicide. The clothes worn in the opera are as sombre as the theme. The opera failed in London when produced by Sir Laurence Olivier at the Cambridge Theatre where it ran only nine weeks.

**lowest of the arts, the.** Acting. This questionable *dictum* dates from the 1890's.

**lowest terms for actors.** There is a story that an old actor, when seeking apartments at the height of the season at a seaside town, asked a landlady what were her lowest terms for actors. 'Bastards!' was her reply.

**lucky to drop powder.** Chorus girls when they accidentally drop powder on the dressing-room floor, dance on it in the belief that it will bring them luck and a quick jump to stardom. See **SUPERSTITIONS.**

**Lyceum.** The old Lyceum Theatre, London, the home of melo-drama. Sir Henry Irving staged many Shakespearean productions here, but the theatre was mainly associated with 'meaty' spectacular drama. Hence *Lyceum technique*, is descriptive of over-acting, ranting, ham-handed performances.

# M

**Ma.** As a mode of address to a theatrical landlady, this is frowned upon by 'up-stage' artistes in No. 1 touring companies, who invariably address her by her proper name. The term *Ma* has been current for at least a century and is still used by vaudeville artistes and less formal people in straight companies. 'What are you giving us for supper tonight, Ma?'

**machine made.** The unindividual style of acting.

**maestro de ballet.** A ballet master, choreographer or teacher of the ballet technique.

**magazine compartment footlights.** In this method of stage-lighting each lamp is set in its own compartment with reflector, and filter frame, complete.

**Maillots.** Tights. Named after the French inventor of these garments.

**main stream.** Broadway, New York. Cf. HARDENED ARTERY. (New York actors.)

**maize country.** 'Corny' dates hidden away *in the long grass* of the country. American in origin, the term has reached the English theatre, especially the touring companies whose lot frequently falls in such territory.

**Malvern.** The Malvern Festival Theatre where a season of plays is presented yearly. A Bernard Shaw festival made this theatre famous.

**make it more pear-shaped.** A completely unintelligible instruction given to an artiste by a certain producer who, quite obviously, had not the vaguest idea what he was talking about and of very little else besides. A stupid cover for his lack of knowledge. The term, however, caught on and spread to other theatres and is used with heavy sarcasm by repertory producers when players give poor representations at rehearsal. 'I suppose its all right, but couldn't you *make it a little more pear-shaped.*' Craig Timberlake describes the U.S. version as 'an unfortunate piece of vocal imagery' which is supposed to designate roundness of tone, and inevitably 'provoked the classic sally: "more pear-shaped? Certainly; which end of the pear?"'

**make fast.** See MAKE OFF, TIE OFF. A flyman's term borrowed from the Navy.

## mark the script

**make off.** To secure a line, or lines so that they are finally made fast (TIED OFF) to a prescribed position. Cf. DEAD.

**make the play.** To redeem a poor play from failure by an outstanding performance, or all-round excellence of acting. 'The acting *made the play*.' An intrinsically good play can succeed even when the acting is indifferent, but a mediocre play must have good acting—provided the play is actable—to keep it alive.

**make-up.** The materials: grease-paints, powder, rouge, wigs, etc., used in the art of facial make-up for the stage. (2) The act of preparing for an appearance on the stage, the painting of the face with grease-paint appropriate to the type of stage lighting used in the play. Make-up, which embraces costume and transformation generally, is a highly technical and complicated business, so much so that a special artist is sometimes engaged for a theatre, as in a film studio.

**make-up box.** Contains compartments to hold sticks of grease-paint, etc., but most artistes use a cigar box, elaborate make-up boxes being regarded as a sign of the amateur. It is a superstition in dressing-rooms that make-up boxes should never be 'cleaned out', as this is said to bring bad luck.

**make-up man.** A make-up artist employed by an amateur dramatic company to help inexperienced players with their make-up in character parts.

**Malapropisms.** Solecisms in pronunciation and in polysyllabic words. Mrs Malaprop, the character in Sheridan's *The Rivals*, whose 'nice derangement of epitaphs' (for *nice arrangement of epigrams*) is a classic quotation, and Dogberry, in Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing*, are the archetypes.

**male impersonator.** This somewhat misleading term means a *female* who impersonates a *male*; e.g., the English music-hall artiste Hetty King, famous for such parts. Cf. FEMALE IMPERSONATOR.

**man of parts.** A versatile (?) actor. 'He plays Hamlet, Romeo, Shylock, and snooker. He plays snooker best.' (Old theatre crack.)

**management, go into.** To form a theatrical company. 'So and So doesn't act any more, he has *gone into management*.'

**mark the script.** This is the stage manager's, or his assistant's, job under the directions of the producer. As the stage directions are given to members of the cast, and business is suggested, so these directions are marked in the prompt book.

## **mask**

**mask.** To stand between a fellow artiste and a line of sight, thus masking him from view by a section of the audience.

**mask in.** To set a scene in accordance with the lines of sight and thus prevent the audience from seeing outside the setting to the unused part of the stage. The wings, flats, etc. *mask in* the off-set area of the stage.

**masque.** Short for *masquerade*, an old-fashioned play of which the most frequently revived, and typical, is John Milton's *Comus*, which has been played in recent years at the Open Air Theatre, in Regent's Park, London. Milton's, however, was an elaboration of the early type of court entertainments, folk plays, and the masques made popular by Ben Jonson, James Shirley and others.

**Master of the Greensward.** Is in charge of the 'stage' at the Open Air Theatre, Regent's Park where Shakespearean plays are presented in a perfect pastoral setting, and performances are of high quality.

**mat.** An American contraction of *matinée*. (Usually in the plural.)

**matinée days.** The artistes' pet aversion. Usually they are on Wednesday and Saturday, though some London theatres have them on Tuesday and Friday. Since the second world war matinées have been given daily in some theatres.

**matinée feeling, that.** The after-lunch lassitude that always seems to make a *matinée* performance so much less vital than an evening one. At least so it feels from an artiste's point of view.

**matinée idol.** A 'romantic' actor popular with those women who attend *matinées* in the West End of London. The term is obsolescent, as there are few plays written for this type of leading man today. Usually very handsome, and impeccably tailored, his parts fit like the proverbial glove. A perfect example of the *matinée idol* was the late Owen Nares, who played these parts for some years. Nares was a real idol, whose technique was the envy of his would-be imitators. He abandoned this type of rôle in the 1930's and proved himself a fine character actor. Sir Gerald du Maurier, though portraying more virile parts, was also a great *matinée* favourite.

**M.D.** Short for musical director, the *conductor* of a musical comedy or a revue.

**mechanics.** The mechanical movements made in the first stages of a rehearsal. 'Let's go over that scene again, but don't act it, just the *mechanics*.'

**Medium.** See GELATINES.

**medium frame.** Holds the gelatine filter in front of the footlight compartment.

**med opera.** Short for *medical opera*, a play in which a doctor is the leading character, or the theme is medical; e.g., Brandon's play *The Outsider*, the 'quack' play that had a long run in London in the early 1920's, or Harold Dearden's *Interference*, which starred Herbert Marshall.

**medza caroon.** Half a crown. (Parlyaree.) Cf. GAROON.

**medzer** (usually in the plural). A copper coin; collectively, *medzers* denotes copper coins; cash'; *nanty medzer*, penniless. From the Italian *mezzo*, half; hence *medza*, a half-penny in Parlyaree. Edward Seago records this term in his delightful *Circus Company*.

**melocution.** That 'mellifluous' articulation associated with melodrama villains. A telescoping of *melodrama* and *elocution*.

**melodrama.** Sensational plays spiced with strong sentiment and interspersed with song or musical interludes. The dialogue is highly bombastic and sentimental. During the act-waits the soubrette of the company sings, or one of the male characters entertains with juggling or 'tells funny stories'. See BELLOWDRAMA and CHORD IN 'G'.

**melos.** An operatic song. 'A term used by Richard Wagner for the vocal melodies in later musical dramas, to exemplify vocal phrases which have not the quality of symmetry characteristic of earlier opera songs.' (Otto Ortmann, in *An Encyclopædia of the Arts*. The Philosophical Library, New York)

**Melpomenē.** The Muse of tragedy. Literally 'the songsters'. (Greek.)

**menagerie.** A slang term for an orchestra. From the zoo-like noises that issue from the band-room instruments when the musicians are tuning up for the overture.

**men aside.** In all stage productions there are a number of men to work each side of the stage during the act changes. They are responsible for the moving of the flats on their side of the stage and for shifting furniture that is stacked there. In touring productions, the plots are sent ahead to the next date on the tour list, and such details, as the required number of stage hands, given to the local stage manager (a euphemism for stage *carpenter*), so that he can make arrangements for hiring the men, or reducing them, according to the needs of the production.

**merry go round, get the**

**merry go round, get the.** To receive a severe 'ticking off' from a producer at rehearsals. (American.)

**mezzanine.** The under-stage space. From the Italian, *mezzanino*, a diminutive of *mezzano*.

**Michael Angelo of Buffoonery, the.** Joseph Grimaldi (1779-1837) the great clown. See JOEY.

**middle comedy.** Greek comedy which burlesqued stories from mythology and introduced typical characters. No pure examples of this type of comedy, which flourished 388-338 B.C., have survived. (H. T. E. Perry's definition in a *Dictionary of World Literature*, edited by Dr Joseph T. Shipley.)

**midnight matinée.** A performance of a metropolitan success, played at midnight to an invited audience of fellow professionals who, by reason of their being engaged at other theatres, are not able to see the show in the ordinary way. These midnight performances are great fun, as the 'all Pro' audience stimulates the cast to surpass themselves, especially in comedy or revue where plenty of latitude is allowed for gags, etc.

**mike fever.** A feeling similar to that of acute stage fright which sometimes overcomes an artiste when facing the microphone in broadcast performances of plays, or when 'airing' alone. Cf. MONOPHOBIA, and STAGE FRIGHT.

**milk the audience.** To over-act; PLAY FOR A 'ROUND.

**mime.** Dumb show. (2) A play performed without speech, gestures being employed instead. From the Greek *mimos*.

**mimodrama.** An elaboration of sense (2) of the preceding. A puppet show.

**minnow.** A very small part. From the small fish so named. Such parts, however, are not to be despised, for they sometimes provide good acting opportunities, and have 'telling' lines that draw attention to the speaker. Cf. TWO LINES AND A SPIT.

**miscast.** Cast out of type or to be assigned a part beyond one's power to sustain. A rôle unsuited to a player's physique or temperament.

**mise-en-scène.** The scene and the artistes grouped together in the scene. The general 'set-up' of the production.

**moke.** 'A type of oil-bound distemper to imitate high gloss finishes where an enamel or cellulose would be forbidden under the fire regulations. It is also used to withstand outdoor weather conditions.' A scene-painter's term. Quoted from the *Strand Electric*

*Engineering Company's* admirable small glossary of *Technical Theatrical Terms*.

**money-spinner.** A successful play or artiste. Examples of such plays: the American musicals *Oklahoma*, *Annie Get Your Gun*, or the phenomenal Ivor Novello successes: *The Dancing Years*, *Perchance to Dream*, and *King's Rhapsody*.

**monkey pole.** A long stick having a line threaded through the top and used to cleat two adjacent flats. By use of this pole the line can be quickly taken over the top cleat on a flat. When the line is cleated it remains attached to the pole.

**monodrama.** A play written for one player.

**monologue.** A dramatic composition for a single artiste. The Greek *monologos*, one speaking alone.

**monophobia.** The fear of being alone on the stage. There are players who, excellent in a general scene, are nervous of having the stage to themselves. This phobia extends to broadcasting alone in a studio. The Greek *monos*, alone, and *phobos*, fear.

**monopolylogue.** An entertainment by one person who impersonates several well-known characters in life or fiction, e.g. Bransby Williams' sketches from the works of Charles Dickens, or Miss Ruth Draper's brilliant work. The Greek *monos*, alone + *polus*, many + *legein*, to speak. Cf. PROTEAN.

**monthly rep.** A Répertory company whose plays run for a month, instead of the weekly, or the fortnightly 'change-about' system; e.g. the famous Liverpool Repertory Company.

**moody Dane.** A variant of GLOOMY DANE, the part of Hamlet.

**morality play.** A medieval allegorical drama, of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Cf. SOTTIE.

**more on/off stage.** The direction to a player to move more towards the centre, or towards the side of the stage, in a lateral direction. Cf. UP/DOWN STAGE.

**mostly paper!** Said of a house that has been generously *papered* with complimentary tickets. Little money taken at the box-office.

**mount** (of a play). To dress and produce it.

**moves.** Movements on the stage as laid down at rehearsal by the producer, whether standing, walking, sitting, or even reclining on a settee. 'You have forgotten a *move*, old boy, you cross down right to the fireplace and sit at the desk.'

**movie version.** The motion picture version of a Broadway or London success.

## Mrs Pat

**Mrs Pat.** Mrs Patrick Campbell, the celebrated English actress whose sharp wit and fiery tongue were respected by many contemporary leading players of the early twentieth century. She was a brilliant actress and the first to use the adjective *bloody* on the stage, when playing Eliza Doolittle, the Cockney flower-girl, a 'guinea pig' of the Professor of phonetics, in George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*. Mrs Pat's best remembered plays are *The Thirteenth Chair* and *Magda*. Late in her career she went to Hollywood to work in films but she never felt satisfied with the medium. The correspondence, scintillating with wit and wisdom, between Mrs Patrick Campbell and George Bernard Shaw—*My Life and Some Letters*, by Mrs Patrick Campbell—should be read by all who are interested in the history of the theatre, of which Mrs Pat was the *aura popularis* of her time.

**multicore.** As the word implies this flexible cable has several insulated cores protected by a strong asbestos covering. It is used between the light battens and the FLY-RAIL.

**multiple wing floods.** Trolley-mounted units of several flood boxes.

**mum.** To act. From MUMMER.

**mummer.** An actor or actress. Literally one who wears a mask (Low German *mumme*, a mask) and acts in dumb show. cf. the Dutch *monnen*, to mask, and the Old French *momer*, to act in dumb show. The term is a professional colloquialism today.

**mummery.** The art of acting. Colloquial, from MUMMER.

**Mummersetshire.** The *lingua rustica* of the stage. Dialect plays are exceedingly difficult to cast, for few actors are able to produce the authentic idiom of the regional dialect required by the play. As a rule consistency is impossible, and an adviser on regional dialect helps the cast to reach a mean which has earned the jocular nickname *Mummersetshire*, or actor's dialect. It is an admixture, at best, with North Country (broad vowels) and Somersetshire (where *s* supposedly becomes *z* in rural areas) predominating. Theatrical *Mummersetshire*—rhyming on *Somersetshire*—has a dialect which is as near as most players can approach authenticity. Regional theatres which specialize in dialect, e.g. the Irish Players, are, of course, impeccable. And one of the finest productions in dialect was the Dorsetshire company of amateurs that performed Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* in Dorchester under the eye of the author himself. Cf. SEVEN UNKNOWN LANGUAGES OF THE STAGE.

**music drama.** An opera that has flowing rather than discursive music: the works, say, of Wagner as opposed to Verdi.

**musical.** A musical comedy or revue (American).

**musical comedy.** An operetta, a light comedy set to music. There is a song motif running through the play, and good parts for the heroine, hero and comedian.

**musical comedy country.** See RURITANIA.

**musicomedy.** A contraction of *musical comedy* (American).

**music hall.** Now called a variety theatre, was instituted in England *circa* 1850, at the Canterbury Music Hall in Westminster Bridge Road, London. The Grand Order of Water Rats and Lady Ratlings, a variety artistes' charity organization, celebrated the century of the English music hall in an all-star programme at the London Palladium in November. See entry at VARIETY.

**music-hall technique.** A farcical comedy, or a comedy sketch played on broad, almost crude lines, after the manner of a music-hall COMIC of the early days.

**mussitate.** To move the lips in simulation of speech, no sound being uttered. Cf. GOLDFISH.

**must speak the King's English.** The rider sometimes seen in the *Wanted Artistes* column in stage newspapers. Usually the advertisements are inserted by small repertory or stock companies. 'Wanted Artistes, all lines, for Resident Repertory Company. Applicants *must speak the King's English* and DRESS WELL ON AND OFF.'

**mystery.** The obscure or puzzling element in a drama.

**mystery play.** A religious play dealing with incidents in the life of Christ. Also known as a *miracle play*. These plays are given at church festivals, or at Christmas and Easter.

## N

**name in lights, have one's.** To have achieved success, one's name appearing in the electric sign in front of the theatre. Such fame can be disconcertingly and heartbreakingly evanescent.

**name-part.** The rôle which bears the *name* of the leading character (*part*) in the play, e.g. 'Drummond', in Sapper's *Bulldog Drummond*. Cf. TITLE RÔLE.

**natural.** A part that it is *natural* for an actor to play, or want to play.

## **naturalistic acting**

**naturalistic acting.** The art of portraying character 'to the life', the 'free-from-artificiality' technique introduced by Sir Harley Granville Barker in England at the beginning of the present century. Although this technique looks perfectly natural from the front, it is far from easy to acquire: it exemplifies 'art concealing art'. Sir Gerald du Maurier was one of its best exponents.

**nature's darling.** The name given to William Shakespeare by Thomas Gray (1716-1771) in *The Progress of Poetry*.

**near the bone.** Said of a salacious play or of a risqué line in revue. 'The *nearer the bone* the sweeter the meat.' Cf. BLUE STUFF, and BLUE GAGS.

**newel.** The handrail at the foot of a stage staircase. Often called a 'newel-post'.

**New York Theatre Guild.** A play-producing society that succeeded the Washington Square Players, whose home was the Bandbox Theatre. The Society now performs at the Guild Theatre, New York.

**nigger heaven.** The highest part of a theatre gallery (American).

**nigger minstrels.** A musical or variety entertainment originating in South America and made popular in the theatre by E. F. Christy, who started his famous Christy Minstrels in 1842. The 'set-up' consisted of a blackface chorus, who 'doubled' the part of 'interlocutor', and two corner boys (END-MEN), who, on the flanks of the chorus, supplied the comedy business and were the target of the interlocutor-cum-compère.

**night, the.** The opening *night* of a new production. Cf. IT'LL BE ALL RIGHT ON THE NIGHT.

**nix.** To ban, censure (a play). From the German *nichts*, nothing.

**noises off.** Effects heard off-stage. The approach of a car, voices, sleigh bells (*The Bells*, a Lyceum drama, was one of those that helped to make the name of Sir Henry Irving), horses' hooves, and other noises incidental to a play.

**nom de théâtre.** A stage name. These were adopted at the time when connection with the stage was not considered respectable.

**non-copyright plays.** Old plays whose copyright has lapsed with the passage of time and can be acted by repertory companies or amateurs. They are performed without payment of fees.

**none of your fancy fours and fives.** A remark alleged to have been made by an agent to a leading touring actor being offered a part in a play, and meaning 'You can have the part, provided

you'll accept a reasonable (*sic*) salary—no four or five pounds a week.' It is now a catch-phrase in the provincial theatre.

**non-practical.** Stage fittings, and such parts of the setting as are merely there *as* scenery, and are not PRACTICAL, q.v.

**no play; no pay.** An old clause in a touring contract. Artistes were paid for their appearances before the public and received no pay for weeks out.

**nose paste.** A putty-like substance that becomes malleable when warmed in the hand. It is used principally for altering the shape of the nose in character parts, e.g. Shylock, the Dromios, and clown-parts.

**nose out.** To discover (a play, or artiste). 'How did he get on Broadway?' 'A talent scout *nosed him out* in a travelling show.' (American.)

**not according to script.** Extraneous lines, or gags, that are introduced during a long run of a play. Cf. NOT IN THE BOOK.

**not a hand.** No applause. Said of a line, or an exit, *that* fails to earn a ROUND. Cf. HANDS.

**not a dry eye in the house.** The reception of a sob-drama or WEEPIE.

**not a dry seat in the house.** An indelicate catch-phrase, meaning that the scene, or comedian, was so funny that the audience was utterly helpless with laughter. On the analogy of NOT A DRY EYE IN THE HOUSE.

**not in the book** (i.e., script). Gags, or lines interpolated during a performance. 'That gag dried me up, it *wasn't in the book!*' (Complaint by a cue-bound player.)

**not Pygmalion likely.** Euphemistic for 'not *bloody* likely', from the use of that adjective in Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion*, by Eliza Doolittle, the Cockney girl.

**notice.** The newspaper critique following a first-night performance.  
(2) That which tells a theatrical company of the termination of the run of their play and ends their contracts. Also used of an individual case of dismissal for incompetence, or bad conduct.

**noticed, be.** To have one's talent spotted by an important manager who happened to be in front. To be recognized by the press. 'A consummation devoutly to be wished', but seldom realized.

**number.** The poor relation of the operatic *aria*. A song, dance-tune. 'Let's try your new *number*, Miss Gay.' (2) A number (figure) that

## **number 1 date**

goes on the side of a music-hall stage to indicate the turn on the programme. Cf. *aria*.

**number 1 date.** Bookings in the English provinces are graded according to the size of the population, and the importance of the town. *Number Ones* are cities the size of Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow and Edinburgh, and some of the London suburbs like Golder's Green and Streatham.

**number 2 date.** A seaside holiday resort, or inland Spa, cathedral, or small industrial city or town.

**number 3 date.** One in a rural, an industrial, or a mining district; e.g., the market towns in the 'broad acres' of Yorkshire, the pottery district, or the mining towns of South Wales. There are also a number of these dates in Somerset, Devon, and Cornwall. Cf. *SMALLS*, *THIRDS*, and *FIT-UPS*.

**number of dressing-room.** A dressing-room number is determined by the relative importance of the artiste in the company. *No. 1 D.R.* is given to the star-lead, and the supporting cast is graded accordingly.

**number the dressing-rooms.** The job assigned to the assistant stage manager of a touring company when he gets the baskets and personal properties into the theatre on Monday morning. He numbers the rooms in order of seniority, then orders the men to place the props in their appropriate 'homes' for the week.

**nut, the.** The amount of money needed from a backer to produce the show. (American.)

# O

**Oakley.** A complimentary ticket. (American.) Annie Oakley was a famous female sharp-shooter who toured with Buffalo Bill's circus in the 1880's, and was the central figure in the recent musical comedy hit *Annie Get your Gun*.

**Oberammergau.** See *PASSION PLAY*.

**oblique, to.** To set scenery at more or less right-angles to the centre line of the stage.

**off.** Off the stage, i.e., the setting. (2) To have missed an entrance cue. An artiste is *off* when he, or she, should be *on* (the stage).

**off-set.** To erect a piece of scenery at an angle to another, not necessarily at right-angles.

**off-stage.** See entry at ON-STAGE.

**off-stage lines.** Those spoken outside the setting. They usually herald the appearance of the leading player and warn the audience that a round of applause would be appreciated. She, or he, usually gets it. Cf. NOISES OFF.

**off-stage space.** The amount of space outside the setting. When stacking flats, furniture, properties, etc., at the sides, or back of the stage, it is well to know beforehand what stage space is available so as to allow for the free movement of artistes and stage hands, behind the scene.

**offer up.** To show the producer the position of a picture or an ornament for approval before fixing it permanently, particularly mirrors which reflect the stage lighting. (2) Carpenters *offer up* doorways to fit into the door-frames, in fact they offer up anything before it is approved. The term is used by carpenters outside the theatre and is peculiar to their trade.

**old boy!** As a mode of address this is employed *ad nauseam* by actors. It has superseded LADDY of the Victorian era.

**Old Vic.** Situated in the New Cut, Lambeth, London, this famous house was originally named the *Coburg Theatre* and, circa 1834, renamed the *Victoria*. Mainly associated with Shakespearean productions, the theatre has been a popular favourite with London playgoers and its history—too colourful to be recorded here, but reverently treated by theatre historians in recent years—is part of the story of London. Like so much that was dear to Londoners, the Old Vic suffered severe damage by bombing in the second world war, which closed the house for several years.

**oleo act.** A scene played in the forepart of the stage while another scene is being set further back. It corresponds to a front-cloth scene. *Oleo* derives either from *oleo* (ex Latin *oleum*, oil) in the oil *painting* (front-cloth) sense, or from *olio*, a hotch-potch, miscellany, hence a music-hall, or front-cloth, sketch.

**omnes.** Latin for 'all'; everybody (on the stage). A collective exclamation, e.g. boos, groans, jeers, murmurs of disapproval or approbation, incredulity and the like. This is a standard stage direction. 'There must be a terrific *omnes* when you hear that line.'

**on.** On the stage, i.e. within the setting. Cf. ON-STAGE.

**on-stage.** Like off-stage, this is a somatic adjective. The on-stage arm is the one nearest the centre of the stage when an artiste faces

## **on-stage off**

the audience. Thus, in position *stage left*, the right will be the on-stage arm, and the left the off-stage one. If the artiste crossed from left to right, his left arm would become on-stage. The same applies to furniture and properties so positioned. 'Bring the settee a little more off-stage' (i.e. towards the side). Cf. DOWN-STAGE and UP-STAGE.

**on-stage off.** This is not as paradoxical as it reads. A player can be on the *stage floor*, but off the setting, waiting for his entrance cue.

**on the boards.** On the stage, i.e. in the theatrical profession, treading the *boards* of the stage floor.

**on the plate.** On the switchboard. This electrician's term dates from the days of gas illumination and refers to the *plate*, or gas control board.

**on the road.** Touring the provinces. A column in *The Stage* newspaper gives the whereabouts for the current week of all touring companies. Thus: '*Annie get Your Gun*: this week, Hippodrome Newcastle; next, Palace, Manchester.' Cf. PLOUGHING THE PROVINCES.

**on the sheet.** The *sheet* is a rough plan of all the seats in the theatre. Seats are marked off, as sold, to obviate double booking. An artiste wanting a seat would say to the Box Office 'Put me *on the sheet* for tonight.' Cf. 'What does the sheet look like for next week?' Meaning how many seats have been booked for the following week's performances.

**on the stage.** In the theatrical profession (cf. ON THE BOARDS). (2) Actually performing on the setting.

**on top of 'em.** A small theatre with little space between the stage and the front seats. 'We were *on top of 'em* last week.'

**once an actor, always an actor.** A stage axiom dating from the 'rogues and vagabonds' days of strolling players.

**one-acter.** A one-act play. A CURTAIN RAISER.

**one-man show.** A variety turn by a single artiste who impersonates several characters, or performs an acrobatic, or a juggling, act. A solo musician on an unusual instrument, e.g. one who plays on a saw or has a one-man band.

**one-nighter.** The same as:

**one-night stand.** A portable theatre erected for one night's performance in a village. See FIT-UP.

**O-O, the.** The *once over*. A quick inspection by the stage director of the stage before the curtain rises. He checks the lights

and the important properties. Just *once* again he looks *over* the scene.

**O.P.** Short for Opposite Prompt (side). Generally this is on the right-hand side facing the audience, but in some theatres the prompt corner is on the right when, in this case, the O.P. is on the stage left. Units of scenery that have to be set on the O.P. side are marked thus: 'Act II, O.P.; Act I, scene 2, O.P.'; and so on. Cf. P.S.

**O.P. Club.** A now defunct theatrical club in London. It was popular during the early part of the present century.

**open.** To open a theatre with a new production. Hence OPENING NIGHT, applied also to any first night of a tour. 'We *open* next week at Brighton for a short tour prior to London production.'

**open cold.** To produce a new play in London directly after rehearsals, instead of having a preliminary run in the provinces. The play hasn't had time to *warm* up. Cf. TRY OUT, and TRY IT ON THE DOG.

**open in a black-out.** An act is said to *open in a black-out* when the curtain rises on darkened scene. The lights go up on a cue: e.g., the entrance of a servant to switch on lights or to open curtains to let in daylight. The lights come up according to the lighting plot.

**open on.** Any door or window that opens on to the stage (i.e. towards the artiste). The door is pushed on to the stage by one making an entrance, and pulled after one when making an exit. Cf. *open off*, where the reverse takes place.

**open set.** The same as:

**open stage.** In classical drama, opera, ballet and such productions as need space for crowd movements, the stage is free of obstructive scenery. Wings, a rostrum (set upstage), or such symbolic pieces are all that one sees on an *open stage*.

**opening.** The width of the stage across the proscenium archway. Cf. DEPTH. (2) A gap in a piece of scenery. (3) The division in tableau curtains.

**opening chorus.** The chorus that introduces a musical comedy or a concert party.

**opening line.** The first speech in a play. 'I must rush down now old boy, I have the *opening line*.' (Artiste to dressing-room visitor.)

**opening night.** A first night of any production. Cf. PLAY NIGHT.

**opera.** A drama set to music. Opera dates from 1597 with the production of Peri's *Dafne* at the Palazzo Corsi in Florence 'as an attempt to revive the classical Greek tragedy.' Opera was thus

## **opéra bouffa**

first a chanted tragedy, with solemn recitative replacing the tragic declamation. This sense of opera as drama, filled with the spirit of Greek tragedy, has persisted throughout its history; it dominates the work of Gluck (eighteenth century) and, (nineteenth century) the reform of Wagner'. (Max Graf in *A Dictionary of World Literature*. Philosophical Library, New York.)

**opéra bouffa.** A semi-comic opera. See **BUFFE**.

**opéra comique.** A comic opera with spoken dialogue.

**opera glasses.** A small pair of binoculars used at the opera house by patrons seated in the circles and balcony. They can be hired in the theatre.

**opera, grand.** Grand opera has no spoken dialogue and is tragic in theme.

**opera seria.** Literally serious opera, as opposed to dramatic opera, or buffe.

**operetta.** A short opera, or musical comedy on operatic lines. *Etta* is an Italian diminutive.

**opposition.** The rival theatre at a provincial date. 'What have we at the *opposition* next week?' ('Touring actors'.) 'We didn't do so well, *Oklahoma* was at the *opposition*.'

**orchestra bell.** A warning bell from the prompt corner to the band-room under the stage. It gives the signal to members of the band that they are required in the orchestra pit for the entr'acte music.

**orchestra pit.** The space in front of, and just below, the stage, where the band plays.

**orchestra stalls.** The seats nearest the orchestra. Cf. **FAUTEUIL**.

**orchestra stands.** Are used in the orchestra pit to hold music sheets.

**organ room.** The exquisitely appointed lounge overlooking the garden and lake at the Glyndebourne Opera House, Sussex. There is an imposing organ at one end of the long room, and a well-selected music library at the other.

**orthoepy.** The science of correct pronunciation in public speech. From the Greek *orthos*, straight, and *epos*, word.

**O.U.D.S.** The Oxford University Dramatic Society, known as the 'Ouds'. This society, which is social as well as dramatic, was founded by the late Arthur Bouchier, the London actor, in 1885. Many front-rank players learnt the rudiments of their art in the O.U.D.S.

**Our Gracie.** Miss Gracie Fields, O.B.E., the first lady of vaudeville. A brilliant artiste, she won the hearts of the theatre public by

many acts of generosity to fellow artistes, and charities, in particular the founding of a children's orphanage at Peacehaven, Sussex. An unselfish trouper, she never refuses an appearance when requested, unless there is an insuperable reason for doing so. Miss Fields is a comedienne as well as a very fine singer, and her famous hits: *Granny's Little Bearskin Rug*, *The Little Pudden Basin*, and *The Rochdale Hunt* (Rochdale is her birthplace) are always demanded of her. But the most requested are her rendering of *Avé Maria* (a moving one) and *Sally in Our Alley*. Gracie Fields has also appeared on the legitimate stage and in films. In recent years English audiences have seen too little of her.

**out of a spot.** (American) OUT OF A SHOP (British). Out of work.

**out-of-town houses.** Theatres outside the metropolitan district.

**out of type, to be cast.** See CAST OUT OF TYPE.

**outstanding.** An artiste of exceptional (outstanding) brilliance. A DRAW at the box-office.

**out with.** Out of London *with* a travelling company. Touring the provincial dates. 'Have you seen So and So lately.' 'No, he is *out with* a musical.'

**over-parted.** Said of a player who is unequal to the performance of an important leading rôle. Also of a repertory artiste who is given too many leading parts in succession. Cf. UNDER-PARTED.

**over-rehearse.** As the term implies, to overwork a player at rehearsal until he becomes stale and irritable.

**overture.** A short piece—usually an Overture—played for a few minutes before the rise of the curtain on the first act of a play.

(2) The introduction to an opera or to a musical comedy.

**overture and beginners!** The warning call that brings beginners (i.e. beginners in the opening act of a play, not stage novices) from their dressing-rooms to take up positions on the stage for the rise of the curtain.

## P

**P.A.** Short for Press Agent or Publicity Agent. This use of initials spread during the second world war and the habit has remained.

**Pa.** The affectionate sobriquet bestowed on the late Sir Frank Benson by members of his Shakespearean Company: to them he acted as 'father'. Francis Robert Benson, born in 1858, became interested in acting while he was at New College, Oxford, where

## pack

he produced the first Greek play to be performed in the University—the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus—wherein Benson played the part of Clytemnestra. On going down from Oxford, Benson adopted the stage as a career and started with Sir Henry Irving in *Romeo and Juliet* at the Lyceum Theatre. In 1883 he took over the Walter Bentley Repertory Company, which had been moribund for some time. His repertoire included Shakespeare and the Old English Comedies. A season at the old Globe Theatre in 1889 was a brilliant success, both for the perfect teamwork of the artistes under R.F.B. (as he was then known) and for the presentation of the plays. After an equally good season at the Lyceum in the following year, Benson formed his own Shakespeare Company, which was to become famous and which gave to acting some of its most celebrated exponents. A fine athlete at Oxford, Frank Benson infused enthusiasm for sport into the members of his companies; this may have accounted for that fine bearing and alertness which soon came to characterize all Bensonians. The first question asked of an aspirant to his company was 'Are you good at games?' A humane, scholarly actor, Sir Frank's performances were always interesting—some were sparkling—but there was an unevenness of execution that disappointed his kindest critics. Hamlet, Lear, Richard II, and Petruchio (an extremely 'athletic' performance), were his favourite parts. It was during the tercentenary matinée at the Lyceum Theatre in 1916 that Frank Benson was knighted on the stage by King George V, with a sword borrowed from a theatrical costumier. He died in 1939. Eminent Old Bensonians include: Henry Ainley (the Voice), Oscar Asche, Robert Donat, Henry Baynten (see BAY) and many other well-known names. Cf. BENSONIAN.

**pack.** A stack of flats at the sides, or back, of the stage. They are packed in order of setting, all prompt-side scenery being stacked at that side, and the others at the O.P. Flats are marked *P.S.* or *O.P.*, with the number of the Act, and scene, for which they are required. Where possible, furniture is packed at the back of the stage and 'run on' when the space is clear of scenery.

**pad.** In the 'make-up' sense, to build up girth by the use of padding material. This has to be done with great skill, especially for such parts as Shakespeare's Falstaff or Sir Toby Belch. (2) To add gags or lines to a colourless part in order to make it more palatable to an audience.

**paint-frame.** A large wooden mobile frame raised and lowered by a winch, and counter-balanced. Large drop-scenes, panorama cloths, etc., are stretched on this frame by the scenic artiste who works on a catwalk built in front of the frame. In most theatres it is situated at the back of the stage, level with the fly-floor and is lit from the skylight above the grid.

**pale week.** One in which business has been consistently poor.

**pan.** To deride, find fault, generally disparage, or denigrate a fellow artiste or a play. (American.) (2) Short for *panatrope*, an electrically-controlled gramophone which, in some theatres, takes the place of an orchestra, but is usually employed for sound effects (2) A *pantechnicon*, a lorry for carting scenery, furniture, properties. Named from the Greek *pas* (neuter *pan*), all + *technē*, art.

**pancake.** A make-up, used chiefly in the film industry, a kind of grease-paint put on with a wet sponge. It resembles a very flat *pancake*, but the term may have been suggested by *panchromatic* make-up.

**panic lights.** See POLICE LIGHTS.

**panorama cloth.** See CYCLORAMA.

**Pantaloon.** This survival from the sixteenth-century Italian comedy is mainly associated with the harlequinade. He is a rather pathetic old man who is the butt of the clown's sallies, and generally provides the broad element in the pantomime frolic (cf. HARLEQUINADE). Wyld derives the name from the Italian *Pantaleone*, a Venetian character in a comedy, probably from the Venetian *Saint Pantaleone*.

**panto.** Short for *pantomime*.

**panto comic.** A pantomime comedian, a Dame, or one of the many other comic characters.

**panto, fix.** To *fix panto* is to have secured an engagement in a Christmas pantomime production.

**panto, in.** Appearing in a pantomime company.

**pantomime.** A composition of song, ballet, and 'hearty' humour. It is a development from the folklore and masque entertainments into a Christmastide frolic which reached its height in the spectacular pantomimes, with transformation scenes, etc., in the Victorian days. The present version is a kind of topical revue written round a very tenuous nursery story, with stock characters like Dick Whittington and his Cat, Cinderella, Prince Charming, the Demon King, Widow Twankey, the Ugly Sisters and others

## **paper**

associated with 'fairy stories'. The pantomime is still very popular, if less spectacular, than formerly. The Greek *pantomimos*, from *pas*, all, and *mimos*, a mimic.

**paper.** Complimentary tickets.

**paper dicky.** A waiter's paper shirt-front, sometimes used by vaudeville actors in parts that are 'hard' on dress shirts. These 'dickies' look very well on the stage, particularly when worn with cuffs of the same material. Three, or even four of these articles are worn in one performance in a knock-about-farce which would be death to evening-dress shirts. Actors in straight plays wear these substitutes when a quick-change does not allow for a complete change of linen.

**paper house.** An audience composed mostly of complimentary-ticket holders. A FREE-LIST audience.

**paper the house.** To distribute complimentary tickets for the stalls and circles to compensate for the poor bookings, and so make it easier for the artistes to perform. It is also policy to paper a flagging play, for it often gives it a new lease of life, the free ticket holders recommending the play.

**parabasis.** The addressing of the audience by the chorus in ancient Greek comedy. From *para*, beyond, and *baino*, go, hence to go in front of the stage to speak. The *parabasis* has been used in modern plays with great effect.

**parachronism.** The introduction into a scene, or dialogue, of that which had ceased to be before the period in which the action of the play takes place. The Greek *para*, beside, and *chronos*, time. Cf. ANACHRONISM and PROCHRONISM.

**paradise.** The theatre gallery. Cf. GODS.

**paragammacist.** A player who has difficulty in pronouncing the letters *G* or *K*. From the Greek *para*, and *gamma*, the letter *G*.

**parlyaree** (occasionally **parlary**). Little is known about this language which has neither accidence nor syntax of its own but is built on a base of Italian words and phrases, whereon cant terms and illiteracies are piled. The 'language' has been ignored by the greater dictionaries, and even Joseph Wright ignores it in his vast and famous *Dictionary of English Dialect*. Eric Partridge, however, has written about this 'bastard' language in his *Here, There, and Everywhere* (Hamish Hamilton). It had crept into theatrical speech with the strolling players at fairground entertainments and at portable theatres; like regional dialect, it acquired

'squatter's rights'. A number of *parlyaree* terms will be found through this glossary. The name derives from the Italian *parlare*, to speak.

**parquet stage-cloth.** One painted to resemble a parquet floor.

**part.** A rôle; character acted in a play or a musical comedy. (2) The typewritten lines from which an artiste learns a part. (3) Cf. BOOK and SIDE.

**part is already cast, the.** The stock reply to any unsuitable applicant. (Managers' and theatrical agents'.) Cf. WE'LL WRITE TO YOU.

**parterre.** The ground floor of a theatre. (2) The lowest tier of boxes at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York. From the French *par terre*, on the ground.

**pas.** A *step* in ballet of which there are many and various. e.g. *pas de chat*, the cat-step; *pas de deux*, a dance for two; *pas de cheval*, a horse-step; *pas de bourée*, the progression on the points by a sequence of very small, even steps, one of the most beautiful effects in ballet, as in e.g. *The Dying Swan*, which is largely composed of this step. The many steps are treated in *Alphabet of Ballet* by Lincoln Kirstein, director of the New York City Ballet, and *A Dictionary of French and English Ballet Terms* by C. W. Beaumont, the London ballet critic and authority on the art.

**pash it.** To simulate passionate love (on the stage) to the leading lady. To make a love-scene convincing to a hard-boiled audience. (American in origin, and adopted in the English theatre through the film studios.)

**pass-door.** The iron door through which one *passes* from the stage to the front of the house. There is a very strict rule about its use. The general manager, stage director, and his staff, and those engaged in essential work, are permitted to make use of this door. Others, whether artistes or staff, wishing to go through must ask permission of one of the above officials. Guests of the management, invited to meet artistes, may be conducted through the pass-door by their host or hostess.

**pass-out checks.** A ticket given by the usher to permit a patron to re-enter the theatre if he, or she, leaves during the interval.

**passing act.** One in which a negro appears (*passes*) as a white man. (American.) By the same token a white man can *pass* as a black.

**Passion play.** A religious drama portraying the scenes of Christ's Passion. The most famous is that presented at Oberammergau in

## **pasteboard**

Bavaria every ten years. It dates from the year 1633 when, after the plague, the peasants resolved to present the play as an act of devotion.

**pasteboard.** A theatre ticket.

**patent theatre.** The old type of theatre that was established by the letters patent and not licensed by the Lord Chamberlain.

**patter.** Quick speeches uttered between their songs by music-hall comedians. From *paternoster*, 'the hurried repetition of familiar prayers' (Weekley).

**pay-boxes.** Ticket offices inside the upper-circle, pit, and gallery doors where patrons pay for admission on the day of the performance. As distinct from the main booking office in front of the house.

**peep-hole.** A small eyelet in the false proscenium, or the advertising curtain, for the use of the stage director and his assistants, and, more often than not, of the entire company. Through it the audience can be seen, without the peeper being observed. To frustrate this practice on the part of inquisitive players, the 'hole' is sometimes a glass dummy.

**pencilled date.** An unconfirmed booking in a tour list. It is *pencilled* until confirmation of the contract has been received by the touring manager.

**penny gaff.** A fairground, or portable theatre which used to charge a penny as the price of admission. See GAFF.

**perches.** Platforms on which the electricians work the switchboards. They are situated behind the proscenium arch. (2) Spotlights or floodlights stationed on the *perches*, and directed therefrom on to the stage through cuts in the *TORMENTORS*. 'Are you using the perches in this scene?' 'No, they are dead until the last act.'

**performance** (of a play, or individual artiste). The act of presentation or portrayal. 'Olivier gave a magnificent *performance* in *Hamlet*.'

**permanent setting;** Standing set

**personal props.** Those carried on to the stage by their owners: e.g. cigarette cases, walking sticks, brief-cases; any properties, in fact, that are provided by individual artistes and not by the management. Cf. *HAND PROPS*, and *STAGE PROPS*.

**phonetics.** The science of the voice, and the analysis of sounds and the law governing them. A highly difficult science.

**phonies.** Hangers-on in the theatrical profession, the 'monied'

amateurs', as they used to be known in the Victorian era. Their meagre talent prevents their attaining distinction. *Phoney* (i.e. sham) artistes.

**photo call.** A call to which all artistes summoned must attend under their contracts, for the purpose of being photographed in incidents from the play. The pictures later appear either in frames in front of the theatre or in the press. Such calls are attended by the artistes without payment.

**photogenic.** The term applied to persons who photograph well; those suitable for motion-picture work. 'He's not *photogenic*.'

**pick up cues.** To take one's cue without hesitation. 'Let's go over that scene once again and—please everybody—*pick up your cues* smartly, the scene is dragging.'

**picture.** A dramatic situation where the people are grouped round the central figure and form a highlight of the scene. It is *held* for a dramatic curtain and for the CALL which follows.

**picture-batten.** See PICTURE-RAIL.

**picture, hold the.** Keep positions for a CURTAIN CALL.

**picture-rail** (on a flat). A wooden rail fixed between the rails at the back of a flat which is to support a picture. An 'eye' is screwed into the rail to hold the picture. Also known as a PICTURE-BATTEN.

**piece.** The Victorian term for a play or drama. 'The new *piece* by Henry Arthur Jones is doing well at the Haymarket.' (2) Generic for any *piece* of scenery, e.g. *door-piece*, *window-piece*, *ceiling-piece*, etc. (3) One's part: 'Come on, say your little *piece*,' (artiste's jocular usage).

**piece, bobtail.** A *bobtail piece* is a domestic drama in a local setting. Such plays may still be performed in the Irish fit-up dates and the term, now obsolete, originated in Ireland. One dealing with the *rag, tag and bobtail*, or 'the common herd'.

**pill.** A large and difficult part to SWALLOW. 'I'm afraid you have rather a *pill* next week, old boy,' (repertory artistes').

**pinch a call** (of stage managers). To ring up the curtain for another ovation when the audience has virtually ceased to 'ovate'. It is hoped that the rising of the curtain may revive the flagging applause. Timid assistant stage managers are guilty of this offence when fearing the wrath of the leading artistes, who look towards the prompt corner to indicate that there is 'just another one'. Cf. DEAD.

## **pinch a curtain**

**pinch a curtain.** See PINCH A CALL.

**pin-point.** To narrow the beam light from a 'spot' by the use of the iris diaphragm. (2) To use such a light on an artiste or on part of the setting. 'Electrics! I want you to *pin-point* the entrance through the double-doors, just where it will catch Miss So and So when she comes in'.

**pin rail.** FLY RAIL, the *pins* being the cleats thereon for making fast the ropes.

**pin spot.** The narrow beam of a spotlight.

**pin-up.** Adjectivally applied to beautiful show-girls whose photographs appear in the 'leg papers', or fashionable journals. Their pictures are cut out and *pinned up* on the walls of their fans, especially in the mess decks, and barrack rooms, of the naval and military services.

**pirouette.** To spin round on the points of the toes. (Ballet.)

**pit.** The part of the auditorium on the ground floor, behind the stalls and immediately below the dress circle. So called because originally the back of Drury Lane Theatre, London, was built on the site of a cock*pit*.

**pit-door keeper.** The attendant in charge of the door leading to the pit. He checks the admission tickets.

**pit public.** Playgoers who patronize the pit seats.

**pit stalls.** Seats midway between the stalls and the pit. The first two or three rows of the pit itself.

**pitites.** The pit patrons.

**pitch.** The height or depth of the voice, the raising or lowering of the voice according to the size, and acoustics, of a theatre. Aitkin, quoted by Egerton Lowe, says 'Pitch is regulated by the tightness with which the vocal chords are stretched. In men they are about  $7/12$ ths of an inch in length, and the vibrations range in a bass voice from 75 to 354 per second; in a tenor from 133 to 562. In women and boys the length is about  $5/12$ ths of an inch; the range of a contralto is from 167 to 795 vibrations per second, and of a soprano from 239 to 1417.'

**places, please!** The stage manager's request to the beginners who open an act to take up the positions in which they are discovered when the curtain rises.

**plank-downer.** One who has paid for his seat, as opposed to one on the free list. (Slang.) He *planks down* his money at the box-office.

**plant a gag.** To interpolate a fresh gag into the book, usually with a local application. A reference to a favourite public-house, a local character, a disreputable locality. It is a favourite habit with touring comedians in revue; they find out from the stage staff what is likely to raise a laugh. Wilfred Pickles, the radio comedian, has done this to perfection in his tours of the English towns and villages with the feature, *Have a Go*. (2) An actor who plays his part in an act from a seat in the auditorium or in the orchestra pit, and goes on the stage from there. There is much cross-talk between the actor in front and the comedian on the stage. The actor is *planted* in the stalls, or in the orchestra pit, and very often the audience takes him for one of themselves.

**play** (of artistes). 'We *play* Manchester next week.' Cf. WORK.

**play as cast.** In advertisements for repertory artistes the phrase means what it says. The management requires a player who is competent, and versatile enough to portray any part assigned to him.

**play down to the troops.** The method of communicating an intelligent play to the alleged unintelligent minds of a service audience. (E.N.S.A., in the second world war.) This impertinent and insulting technique defeated its own object, for the troops walked out and repaired to the N.A.A.F.I. canteen. But this is not to say that every performance given to the Forces was so rendered; indeed, many first-class plays were admirably acted in the worst of conditions for artistes who, moreover, faced some extremely critical audiences.

**play for a laugh.** To accentuate a line, or broaden a piece of comedy business, for the sake of a laugh.

**play for a round.** The deliberate stressing of 'gallery' lines or 'heroic' business to earn applause. STAGE HOGS cannot resist this.

**play to capacity.** To have a full house.

**play under canvas.** To act in a large tent at, say, a fairground where crude melodrama was still performed in the English provinces at the beginning of the present century. See TENT THEATRE.

**play West End.** To use the restrained method of naturalistic acting characteristic of that in London's West End theatres. The opposite of playing BROAD.

**playbill.** A poster advertisement. They have existed since the sixteenth-century, Eliezer Edwards quotes (*Dictionary of Words, Facts and Phrases*) an entry in *The Register of the Stationers' Company*,

## playdom

dated October 30th, 1587, the quaintly worded: 'John Charlewood. Lyncenced to him by the whole consent of thassistantes [the assistants] the onelye ympryntinge of all manner of Billes for players, iis, vid.' This was the first entry of any exclusive right to print playbills, though they must have appeared before this time.

**playdom.** The world of plays and players, the theatre world of New York. The variant *playerdom* is wherever stage artistes congregate.

**playgoer, earnest.** A serious-minded stage 'fan'. The *earnest playgoer* is a cornucopia of knowledge appertaining to plays and players, possesses an elastic memory, and is quick to show pleasure or disapproval. Touring artistes might remember this, for the local *E.P.* seldom misses a performance.

**playgoers.** Legitimate theatre patrons, as distinct from vaudeville-goers.

**playhouse.** A theatre.

**playitis.** The *cacæthes scribendi* of the drama, the ambition to write plays. How few good plays come out of the enormous output of these aspirants is evidenced by the number of REVIVALS that are presented in a year.

**playwright.** An author of plays; a dramatist. On the analogy of shipwright and wheelwright. The *wright* element comes from the Anglo-Saxon infinitive, to engrave, draw, write, work, fashion. Ultimately from *wyrhta*, a maker, a worker or builder.

**plot.** The main story in the drama. It is contended by Georges Polti that there are only thirty-six plots, of which all others are variants. French scholars are recommended his admirable survey: *Les Trente-Six Situations Dramatiques*. (2) The list of furniture (*furniture plot*), lights (*lighting plot*), properties (*property plot*), etc. in a production. (3) To make a note of: 'Plot that.'

**plot, sub.** The subsidiary *plot* in a play. The SECONDARY PLOT.

**plough the provinces.** To tour with a company in the English provinces, especially the small dates. The term is a survival of the rustic theatre when actors played to the 'turnips' (rustics). Cf. ON TOUR.

**plug** (of spoken lines). To give them stress so as to ensure their efficacy, or to gain response from a dim-witted audience. Cf. PUT IT ON WITH A TROWEL.

**Plush family, the.** The empty seats. From the plush material with which the seats are covered. A jocular analogy of *the Wood family*.

'What's the house like, tonight?' '*The Plush family*, as usual. This tour is disastrous!' (touring actors' jocular).

**pocket.** A stage light-dip.

**poetic drama.** The generic term for all plays written in verse. e.g.

T. S. Eliot's *The Cocktail Party* or Christopher Fry's *Venus Observed*.

**points.** The key lines, or words, in one's part. A player who is not capable of 'making his *points*' (i.e. stressing his lines at the right time) will never get over. (2) *Les pointes*, the tips of a dancer's toes.

**police lights.** Such lights in various parts of a theatre as, by the law of the land, must be kept alight during the performance; e.g. exit lights, which are known in the theatre as 'panic lights' because they prevent panic in the case of an electric light failure.

**pom-pom dress.** The conventional Pierrot costume of white pantaloons, white jacket, decked with black pom-poms, or any other good combination of colours: mauve with gold pom-poms, black with orange, grey with pink. The costume is topped by a black silk head scarf surmounted by a coned hat of the same colour as the dress, and decorated with contrasting pom-poms. In the seaside Pierrot shows the hat went round the audience to collect the coppers from those outside the enclosure.

**pong.** To substitute words for those in the part, when an artiste fluffs. A resourceful player can, by intelligent ponging, prevent a too-obvious STICK. Contrast, however, CUE BOUND and CUE-STRUCK.

**portable.** Short for PORTABLE THEATRE.

**portable board.** A six-circuit switchboard, complete with dimmers, used in productions to supplement the stage switchboard.

**portable theatre.** A fit-up theatre (with scenery, properties, etc.) which moves from village to village by rail or road. It can be a prefabricated theatre, or a large marquee. Cf. BOOTH and FIT-UP.

**positions.** Those taken up by artistes on the stage for the opening of an act.

**positions for curtain.** The grouping of the cast for the curtain call at the end of an act or the end of the performance, to receive the applause of the house. These positions are determined at the dress rehearsal.

**positions, please!** See PLACES, PLEASE.

**pounce bag.** 'A muslin or lightly woven bag containing ground colour for knocking against a stencil, thereby impressing the

## **pounce wheel**

design for the final painting of a repetitive scenic piece.' (A. O. Gibbons.)

**pounce wheel.** 'A sharp-toothed wheel mounted in a handle for perforating the stencil, making possible the use of a pounce bag.' (A. O. Gibbons.)

**poverty corner.** The area around the London Hippodrome end of Leicester Square, and the lower part of Charing Cross Road from Wyndham's Theatre to the Garrick Theatre. Here congregate the bonhomous 'Thespian throng' to exchange the gossip of the day. Confidences are exchanged regarding projected plays or musicals. Old friends meet after several weeks, or months, 'on the road', for it is usually the out-of-work Pros who foregather on Poverty corner, and 'What do you know?' is the stock greeting. A successful musical play and film, *Charing Cross Road*, was written around this region, which is also known as *heartbreak corner*. Cf. WHAT DO YOU KNOW? and THEATRE ROYAL OUT.

**powder.** Is used to tone down grease-paint make-up, and for other purposes such as whitening the hair, etc. Its uses will be outlined in any good book on stage make-up.

**powder-off.** To tone down a facial make-up.

**practical.** Anything that *works* on the stage. Door handles that turn; windows that open; light switches that are connected with the main switchboard and can be turned on by the artiste; a telephone bell that rings; in fact, anything not purely ornamental in a stage setting. They serve a *practical* purpose rather than an ornamental one.

**practicals.** Stage fitting that can be operated by artistes on the stage. See preceding entry.

**Prada.** The initial-formed name for Pre-R.A.D.A., a preparatory department of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (pronounced *Prahda*). Cf. R.A.D.A.

**prairie comedian.** A 'corny' artiste in an American touring show. A touring comic.

**premier.** A first performance of a new play in London or New York, though it is applicable to any first night, anywhere.

**pre-set board.** One allowing of the pre-selection of circuits so that, at cue, several circuits can be dimmed out by a single master switch and another pre-selection brought on by closing another master switch. These switches are known to electricians as *scene masters*.

**press, good/bad.** Favourable, or unfavourable, newspaper notices.

**press representative.** Publicity agent. One working in liaison with newspapers and journals.

**prima ballerina.** The principal (female) dancer in a *corps de ballet*.

**prima donna.** Strictly, the first lady in (Italian) opera, though the term embraces all opera.

**prime.** To treat new scenic-canvas with a solution of size and pigment. The preparation of the canvas for painting.

**Prime Minister of Mirth.** George Robey, the English comedian.

Mr Robey, still hale and hearty, has long been the best loved figure on the music-hall stage, and many of the songs he made famous are still heard at sing-songs and Service Reunions. During the first world war George Robey starred with Violet Lorraine in *The Bing Boys*, which was followed by *The Bing Boys on Broadway*. The lilting, sentimental duet 'If You were the Only Girl in the World' was one of the biggest 'hits' of *The Bing Boys* and is a favourite number in the *Songs of the Great War* medley. His 'It's naughty, but it's nice' style of humour is in a class by itself, cleverly inoffensive, robust, and altogether delightful. A man of culture and versatility, George Robey has written several humorous books and many piquant short stories.

**principal boy.** Paradoxically, the principal *girl* who plays the Prince Charming in a Christmas pantomime.

**principalitis.** Those small-part singers in Grand Opera who think themselves capable and worthy, of the principal parts are said to suffer from *principalitis*.

**principals.** Players of the *principal* characters in plays or musical productions. The leading players. Cf. TAIL, THE.

**prior to London production.** The intimation on playbills that the play is being given a short run before its metropolitan première. Cf. TRY-OUT.

**probation part.** A rôle assigned to a young artiste on the understanding that if he, or she, doesn't succeed in it, the part will be withdrawn and given to another player. Cf. TRIAL PART.

**problem play.** One that treats of a psychological, or a sociological, problem. During the 1900's there was a spate of such plays, e.g. John Van Druten's *Young Woodley*, Sidney Howard's *The Silver Cord*, and, recently, *The Street Car named Desire*.

**procellous.** As in 'a very striking *procellous* effect'. A storm scene, from the literal sense of the Latin *procella*, a storm. (A pedantic adjective common with Victorian critics.)

## **prochronism**

**prochronism.** The pre-dating of an event, or the use of up-to-date colloquialisms in a play whose action takes place long before such an expression became fashionable.

**producer.** This misnomer for stage director is so firmly planted in the theatre soil that it is likely to prove as hardy a perennial as *female impersonator* and similar misapplications. He directs the artistes in the rehearsal of a play and arranges the décor, lighting, etc., according to the period and atmosphere of the author's play.

**producer's play.** One reflecting credit on the producer rather than its intrinsic merits *as a play*. It provides scope for the producer's ideas, and allows him thoroughly to enjoy himself.

**production.** The entire set-up of a modern play, opera, musical comedy, revue or cabaret show. Scenery, lighting, properties publicity, even the artistes themselves are included in this all-embracing term.

**production account.** The stage director's account of all properties, bought; expenses for the hire of furniture, lighting equipment; wages to all stage hands employed during the course of rehearsals; the cost of lighting consumed at any other theatre in which the play was rehearsed; the hire of rehearsal rooms and all incidental expenses incurred in the way of entertainment by the stage director and his staff, to say nothing of 'palm-greasing' (as tipping is called in the theatre). In fact, all expenses incurred up to the rise of the curtain on the first night.

**Profession, the.** The theatrical profession. Also known as the BUSINESS.

**professional jealousy.** Though far less prevalent than it was during the last century, this form of cold warfare can be extremely dangerous and has caused much trouble 'backstage'. Professional jealousy is manifested in many subtle ways, by innuendo, gossip or, in blatant cases, by overt acts upon the stage. Masking the object of jealousy by deliberately standing in the line of sight; speaking, or moving, during lines and so distracting the audience's attention. Much of this jealousy is unwittingly created by the press, which may give prominence to one artiste at the expense of another equally entitled to 'news space'. Incredible are the shifts to which a professionally jealous person would go in the days when this habit was more general.

**profile.** A *fret-piece* cut out of three-ply wood and painted in

perspective where it would be impossible, or unnecessary, to build three-dimensionally.

**projector.** A spotlight, or lime, used specifically for the projection of light directionally, as opposed to the flooding, or diffusion, of light.

**prologue.** A speech, or poem, recited to the audience as introductory to a play. Cf. EPILOGUE.

**proletariat opera.** One dealing with the working class. Contrast LOUNGE-SUIT OPERA.

**prompt book.** The fair copy of the typescript of the play. It is kept in the prompt corner and held by one of the stage managers. See also:

**prompt copy.** The stage director's 'marked' script, which contains the producer's final directions, the business, lighting, cues, effects, calls, etc. *Prompts* are given from this copy only, for it is to the play what a *definitive* edition is to a book: the producer's last word. It is kept in the prompt corner during the running of the play, and in the stage director's office at other times, except during the rehearsing of understudies.

**prompt entrance.** That way on to the stage from the prompt corner which is for the use of the stage management. The cast may use this entrance if it helps them, but otherwise permission must be asked from the stage director.

**prompt proper.** The customary (*proper*) position of the prompt corner in most English theatres is on the player's left hand when facing the audience. Occasionally, however, the corner is on the opposite side which then makes the left-hand corner the O.P.-side. Cf. REVERSED THEATRE and entries at O.P. and:

**prompt side.** The side of the stage from which an artiste takes a prompt. Cf. O.P.

**prompt, take a.** See TAKE A PROMPT.

**prompt table.** One used on the stage at rehearsals. The prompt book is placed thereon and the stage manager follows the text and prompts when an artiste needs help. Also the stationary table in the prompt corner used by the person 'on the book' during the performance.

**pro digs.** Theatrical apartments. *Professional diggings.*

**pro-donna.** A theatrical landlady. A jocular analogy of the operatic PRIMA-DONNA. Cf. MA.

**pro landlady.** A *Professional landlady*, or boarding-house keeper.

## **propaganda play**

Those kindly folk who have helped many *Pro's* during their struggles 'on the road', and whom most artistes remember with affection when 'looking back' from London eminence.

**propaganda play.** One having a message to a particular sect or to a type of audience.

**prop basket.** Short for:

**property basket.** A large hamper, containing stage or personal properties. It is the traditional boast of an old actor that he was born in a *prop basket* in the prompt corner. Cf. SKIP. .

**prop gag.** Is short for *property gag*. A trick effect, e.g. an expanding fish used by a comedian when retailing mendacious angling stories. Any fun-making instrument used in SLAP-STICK comedy or in pantomime.

**prop-room.** Short for property-room, the abode of the theatre property master. It is a workshop-cum-store where this craftsman makes the properties used in a production when he lacks the articles in his *standard props*.

**props.** Short for *properties*. 2. The nickname for and vocation of Property Master, the official in charge of the properties used on the stage. See PROP ROOM, above.

**props, stage.** Those used on the *stage* as distinct from HAND-PROPS or PERSONAL PROPS. e.g., flower vases, candlesticks, clocks, telephone apparatus, waste-paper baskets and the like.

**props, travel on one's.** See TRAVEL ON ONE'S PROPS.

**prop table.** See STAND-BY TABLE.

**Pros.** Professional artistes. 'The *matinée* was a wow, the house was stiff with *Pros*.' It is on *matinée* days that fellow professionals attend performances of their friends' plays when such *matinées* fall on other days than their own. See MIDNIGHT MATINÉE.

**pros** (pronounced *pross*). The *proscenium*.

**pros batten.** Short for *proscenium batten* or Number One light batten.

**pros border.** Short for PROSCENIUM BORDER.

**pros box.** The stage box, adjoining the *proscenium* arch.

**pros wing.** See RETURN.

**proscenium.** Part of the stage between the curtain and the orchestra. It contains the *proscenium* arch through which the audience views the play.

**proscenium border.** The permanent border in front of the curtain.

**pross.** This Victorian slang verb for cadge (e.g., drinks or cigarettes)

has fallen into disuse since the end of the great war (1914-18). A secondary sense of the verb is 'to coach, school, train (stage beginners)'; and in this sense it may derive from the Romany meaning of *pross*, to ridicule.

**pross.** As a substantive in slang, a *pross* is one who can be prevailed upon to stand a less fortunate artiste a drink or a loan. Also a *cadged* drink.

**pross, on the.** Sponging on a stage BEGINNER for drinks. The novice is expected to stand a round in appreciation of the tuition received from his mentor. This is more the sense (2) of *pross*, the verb.

**prosser.** A cadger. One of the HALF-CROWN BRIGADE.

**Prossers' Avenue.** The old Gaiety Bar, so christened by the music-hall singer Ted Hughes.

**Protean act.** An act performed by a:

**Protean entertainer.** A lightning-change artiste. An impersonator in the manner of Bransby Williams. From *Proteus*, the sea god, who had the power to change his form at will.

**provinces.** The English provincial towns. Cf. PLOUGH THE PROVINCES.

**provincial actor.** Variant of:

**provincial player.** An actor, or actress, whose career is spent in the provincial theatres.

**provincial theatre.** The stage outside London.

**public.** Generic for audiences. An artistes' FANS are known as a public. 'My *public* will hate me in this part' (actress's lament when offered an UNSYMPATHETIC PART).

**public dress rehearsal.** Sometimes follows a private dress rehearsal. At the Glynedebourne Opera House, Sussex, it is customary to admit the public to the final dress rehearsal, at a reduced price of admission.

**publicity.** Advertising generally. Hoarding bills, newspaper notices, shop and hotel display cards, handbills, throw-aways, and the rest.

**publicity agent.** The official in charge of advertising matter. Cf. ADVANCE MANAGER.

**publicity chaser.** An artiste thirsting for any form of publicity. Cf.:

**publicity hog, publicity hound, publicity chaser.** Cf. LIMELIGHT HOG.

**pull-in.** A leading player with power to attract (pull in) audiences to the theatre. 'Du Maurier was a good *pull-in*, whatever part he had.' Cf. BOX OFFICE DRAW.

## **punks**

**punks.** Country audiences, rustics. Hence, *playing to the punks* is the American version of *playing to the turnips*. *Punk* is touchwood, worthless stuff, and is applied slangily to anything of poor (here, of poor critical) quality.

**pusher.** A scenery *pusher*. A stage-hand who runs the flats.

**put a stool down.** To hire a stool for the pit or the gallery queue.  
Cf. QUEUE STOOL.

**put it on with a trowel.** To overact the sentimental or comedy element. From a builder using cement when slapping it on with his trowel.

**put on.** Produce (a play or musical). 'That new show of Tom Arnold's is beautifully *put on*.' (2) (Of expression) assumed. 'He *put on* a pretty grim look when he heard the agent's terms.'

## Q

**quarrel scene.** A fight, or 'high words', in a drama. A wonderful opportunity for histrionics. Quarrel scenes, especially stage fights, have to be very carefully rehearsed, especially in the old dramas when swords were used.

**quarter, the.** The *quarter*-of-an-hour before the OVERTURE is played. 'Have you heard the *quarter* yet?' 'Yes, it went some time ago. He'll be calling the *five minutes*, any time.'

**quartette.** A group of four actors, or singers, from the musical sense.

**queer.** A slang name for a homosexual, or any effeminate type of man. Cf.:

**queen.** A homosexual; especially a catamite. In the plural it is generic for effeminate types.

**queen it** (of a leading lady). To give oneself airs and generally to become obnoxious to the rest of the cast. To seek the centre of the stage and act the great lady.

**queue for stools.** The queue which forms, in the forenoon, to wait for the theatre attendant to issue the stools for the pit and gallery queues. The stools are placed with the patrons' names on them and save the long wait—sometimes for hours—for the doors to open. Before the inception of queue stools, district messengers were sometimes employed to stand in the queue.

**quick change.** A rapid change of raiment during a performance.

Just sufficient time to leave the stage, change clothing, and be back for an entrance cue.

**quick-change artiste.** A variety artiste specializing in PROTEAN acts.

**quick-change room.** This can be a dressing-room near the stage or a number of flats cleated together at the side of the stage. In musical shows having many changes of scenery, and dresses, it is often necessary for artistes to change 'at the side', especially in twice-nightly versions.

**quius kius.** Silence! cease! be quiet! (especially when waiting at the side of the stage for entrance cues). This obsolete catch-phrase is recorded in Eric Partridge's *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, 4th Edition, (Addenda), and was current from 1880-1910. The *kius* reduplicates *quius*, from the Latin *quietus*.

**quoth the raven.** A quotation from Edgar Allen Poe's poem, the full line being: 'Quoth the raven, never more!' Often written in a theatrical landlady's visitor's book. It warns other lodgers that the DIGS are not good.

## R

**rachel.** Face-powder of a lightish fawn tint. 'It was devised in honour of Elisa Félix, stage-named Mademoiselle Rachel (1820-58); she achieved a fame second only, among French actresses, to that of Sarah Bernhardt. She excelled in tragic rôles and was a creature of fire and quicksilver.' (Eric Partridge, in *Name into Word*)

**rack.** The key-rack in the stage doorkeeper's office. Artistes 'draw' their dressing-room keys from him when they arrive at the theatre, and surrender them to him when they leave after the performance. See STAGE DOORKEEPER.

**Rada.** The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, Gower Street, London, presided over by Sir Kenneth Barnes. Students of the drama are trained in stagecraft, deportment, elocution, etc. *Rada* is the forcing ground of talent and many present-day leading players graduated here. (Pronounced *Rahda*.)

**radio show.** An entertainment that, through its popularity as a radio feature, tours the country in a stage version. Cf. SOAP OPERA.

## **rag**

**rag.** The stage curtain. Cf. ADVERTISER; BLIND; FRENCH TABS; IRON; ROLLER; TABS; TRAILER, and VELVETS. 'What time does the *rag* go up next week?'

**rail.** The horizontal wooden piece at the back of a flat. Cf. FLY-RAIL and STILE.

**rain box.** An oblong box about four feet by six inches, containing dried peas, or lead shot. By moving the box up and down, an excellent rain effect is produced. Compare:

**rain drum.** A circular trough with a parchment base in which grape shot, or dried peas are rotated to give a tropical rain sound. Compare:

**rain pipes.** Water pipes specially constructed, with small holes in the undersides, for visible rain effects. The pipe is connected to the fire hydrants and, where necessary, erected over doors and windows.

**rake.** A stage is raked at half an inch in rise per foot of stage depth. Modern stages, however, have no rake, though the auditorium is slightly raked to give better visibility to the audience.

**raking piece.** A triangular piece of scenery painted to resemble a garden, road, or grass bank, which masks a ramp. (2) A length of wood tapered for placing under a scenic piece so that it will look level on a raked stage.

**rally.** Increased tempo in a scene, or at the end of an act in farce, or at a dramatic climax in a drama. 'You were all rather slow at the *rally* last night, please quicken the scene tonight.'

**ramp.** That inclined side of a plank which takes the place of steps leading up to a rostrum. (2) The slope from the dock-doors of a theatre to the trucks, or floats. Do not confuse with RAKE.

**rant.** To act noisily, be bombastic in the manner of the barnstormers. To mouth and over-gesticulate. Cf. TEAR A PASSION TO PIECES.

**ranter.** An actor who employs a flamboyant, clamorous dramatic technique to GET OVER. This sort of actor is rare today.

**raspberry.** A 'rude noise' of disapproval from the gallery. Short for *raspberry tart*, a piece of rhyming slang.

**rave.** To rant in the manner of the 'hamish' melodrama actors. (2) To enthuse over a performance. 'The press raved over the show.'

**read.** To read a part at rehearsal, or to do so at a performance, when sudden illness causes a player to be 'off' and no understudy

is available. The part is usually read by the stage manager or a small-part player. It is never a satisfactory arrangement, and seldom resorted to, except in desperation.

**reading of a 'part, the.** Its interpretation and portrayal.

**realism.** The presentation of plays according to 'real life'. Cf.

NATURALISTIC ACTING.

**recep.** Short for *reception* (of a play or individual performance). 'I had a wonderful *recep* at Swindon when I went back in panto.' (Actresses' colloquial, now obsolete.)

**recitative.** An operatic 'narrative', sung in the speaking style without a defined melody. It is neatly defined by Jeffery Pulver as 'the prose of vocal music'. Cf. CALYPSO.

**red, and blue boxes.** The boxes on the right and the left side, respectively, of the auditorium at the Glyndebourne Opera House. See RED, AND BLUE SIDES.

**red side and blue side.** Respectively, the right and left sides of the auditorium at the Glyndebourne Festival Opera House, Sussex, where there is no centre-aisle. The seat tickets are either red or blue according to which side of the house the numbers are situated. People holding *red* tickets enter the auditorium through the *red*-painted corridor in the Covered Way, and *blue* ticket holders enter through the *blue*-painted corridor on the Tudor Garden side of the theatre. In row C, for example, there are 22 seats, numbers 1 to 11 having red tickets, numbers 12 to 22 having blue tickets. This division of colours obtains throughout the house: boxes, balcony, and stalls. Prospective patrons (see GUESTS) might remember this colour ruling, which would save time in case of a last-minute arrival. The entrances to the boxes and to the balcony are in the COVERED WAY, the right-hand door being for *red* ticket holders, the left-hand for *blue*.

**red-nosed comic.** A variant of LANCASHIRE COMIC. He wears grotesque clothes and reddens his nose in the manner of the traditional clown.

**red, white and blue.** A brand of theatrical grease-paint. cf. LEICHTNER.

**Ref, the.** The defunct *Sunday Referee*, a favourite newspaper read by thousands of PROS on Sunday train journeys, from the 1880's to the 1920's when the paper died. The *Sunday Ref* contained notices of plays, variety gossip, as well as the famous 'Mustard and Cress' column which was started by the late George R. Sims. The *Ref*

## **register, high/low**

was to actors what *The Observer* and *The Sunday Times* are to literary men today.

**register, high/low.** Applied to singing or speaking voices. 'Take it at a *lower register*, Miss Gay.'

**rehearse.** To try over or practice (a play, or musical comedy), hence *rehearsal*, a trial performance.

**rehearsal pay.** That given to players who rehearse more than the prescribed number of 'free' calls. Since the advent of Equity a more reasonable scale of payment has been agreed upon by managements.

**rehearsal rooms.** Hired for the rehearsal of plays when no stage is available. Large rooms in restaurants, halls, or public houses are mostly used for this purpose.

**religious drama.** See MIRACLE PLAY, and MYSTERY PLAY.

**remote-control board.** A lighting switch board that operates independently of the main board.

**rep.** Short for *repertory*.

**rep., in.** Appearing in a repertory company. 'What are you doing these days?' 'Well, I'm *in rep.* at the moment but I am going out with *Mr Roberts* next month.'

**repartee.** Quick, witty replies in dialogue. 'Snappy come-backs' in cross-talk comedy on the music halls. The *answers* in stage conversation. French *repartie*, 'an answering blow, or thrust (in fencing, etc.) and thence, a return of, or answering blow' (Ernest Weckley quoting Cotgrave).

**repertory, or repertoire.** A stock of plays kept by a theatrical management which are performed during a repertory season. From the Latin *repertorium*, an inventory.

**Repertory Players, the.** The leading Sunday Society. It has produced plays in London for over thirty years. Its members include leading managers and artistes. Only original plays are staged, revivals being prohibited by the rules of the Society. The Committee, composed of leading lights in the West End theatre, are extremely conservative and such plays as are selected for production are of high merit, and are frequently bought for the London theatre and become successful. On the average, eight new plays a year are presented by the Repertory Players.

**repertory performance.** This is a disparaging description of a poor version of a London success. An under-rehearsed performance in the style of the necessarily hurried methods of weekly

## Restoration comedies

repertory production in which there is not enough time for finesse.

**répétition générale.** A midnight matinée performance following the ordinary evening one. (Adopted from the French.) (2) A dress rehearsal to which the public is invited.

**repose.** Ease upon the stage, ability to keep still without appearing awkward, stiff, or self-conscious.

**resident manager.** The manager of the theatre as distinct from the acting manager of a visiting company. He handles all the local business. Cf.:

**resident stage manager.** The title by which the permanent *carpenter* of a theatre likes to be known. In a provincial theatre he works with the carpenter of the visiting company. The R.S.M. is an important functionary in any theatre and is worthy of the greatest respect, for under his control, work the RESIDENT STAFF.

**resident staff.** The permanent staff of a theatre. They live locally, and are known as 'the boys'. Cf. TOURING STAFF.

**resin box.** A shallow box containing resin. One is kept at each side of the stage for dancers to step into and cover the soles of their shoes with resin, which prevents their slipping on the stage.

**resistance.** See DIMMER.

**resolution.** The removal of difficulties in a drama. The final adjustment.

**responsible player.** One that can be relied upon to give a competent performance in character, as well as in straight parts.

**responsibles.** Responsible parts assigned to touring, or to repertory, artistes. (2) The players of such parts. 'We have fixed a joint engagement as *responsibles* in rep.' 'Wanted, sound actor for *responsibles* and stage management' (newspaper advertisement).

**rest lights.** To reduce lighting to the bare essentials at rehearsals, or during the act-waits. A working light, or *T-piece*, is sufficient when 'walking' scenes without books.

**resting.** Euphemistic for 'out-of-work'. In the *Theatrical Card* column in stage newspapers, one finds *resting* to be the state of quite a number of artistes in this very overcrowded profession. Cf. AT LIBERTY.

**Restoration comedies.** Those produced during the Restoration period of English history, from the time of King Charles' return to the throne in 1660 to about 1720. It was an age of witty and distinguished writing. The best-known and most representative

## **return date**

of Restoration dramatists are: William Congreve (1670-1729), who was perhaps the greatest of them all, and whose brilliant *The Way of the World* (1700) has been frequently revived in recent years; William Wycherley (1640-1716), who adapted *The Plain Dealer* from *Le Misanthrope* of Molière and whose *The Country Wife* is still a popular revival. Thomas Otway, somewhat embittered by his association with the actress Elizabeth Barry, produced, in 1682, that great play *Venice Preserved*, and translated Racine and Molière. He learnt his stage-craft as an actor. One of the biggest successes of the Restoration period was John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*. Other dramatists whose plays have been 'restored' from time to time are Sir John Vanburgh (1664-1726), a witty and amusing writer. George Farquhar (1678-1707), ex-actor, who will be remembered by his delightful *The Beaux' Stratagem*. The age was one of adventure, intrigue, (entertaining) 'licentiousness', and healthy, if coarse, humour; and the very spirit of the period is reflected in the comedies.

**return date.** A further booking at the same theatre as a result of a very successful and profitable week. ('Touring companies'.)

**returns.** Pieces of scenery placed at right-angles to the stage flats. (2) The ticket counterfoils that are checked with the booking sheets by the business manager on the morning after the performance. (3) Unused theatre tickets, *returned* before the performance for resale.

**Reunion Theatre**, whose motto might well be 'Should old acquaintance be forgot', is an organization acting as liaison between the returned Service artiste and the commercial theatre. With the Services Sunday Society, Reunion Theatre—which was formed at the end of the second world war—has done much to help bridge the gap between 1909 and the post-war years. Two outstanding London successes, *The Nose* and *The Man from the Ministry* were first produced by this organization, whose aim is to produce eight new plays a year.

**reveal.** The 'thickness' of a wall between the stage setting (flats) and the door.

**reversed theatre.** One having the prompt side on the O.P. side. In England the usual side for the prompt corner is on the artiste's left, but occasionally the position is *reversed* and the prompter works from the right-hand corner of the stage. In American theatres the prompt corner is usually on the right.

**revival.** The presentation of an old favourite for a limited run.

**revolve.** A *revolving* stage. A turning section of the 'acting area' on which a scene is set. When a set is being performed upon, other sets are ready on the other sides of the 'revolve', which are brought forward as required. At the end of an act, the set is revolved and the next one faces the audience. It is of great value in plays with multiple scenes, needing quick changes. The revolving stage was invented by Karl Kautenschläger and first used in Munich in 1896.

**revolving batten.** A light batten supporting a four-sided magazine compartment containing colour media, frosts, reflectors, etc. It is wired in circuits so that the lighting can be set for the production, and appropriate lighting brought forward according to the plot. These units can be electrically or manually operated.

**rice.** Sometimes used by the property master for rain effects.

**right.** In stage directions the right-hand side of the stage *facing* the audience. The actor's right. In most theatres the O.P. SIDE.

**rig lights.** To place spotlights, floods, lighting towers, lengths, etc., in their correct positions on the plot. The term *rig* must not be confused with SET, which means to light (i.e. switch on) the scene. See SET YOUR LIGHTS.

**'Ring, The'.** *Der Ring des Nibelungen* of Richard Wagner. It comprises the four operas: *Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*. (2) The West End 'ring' of theatrical managers.

**ring the band.** The stage manager does this from the prompt corner, either a few minutes before the Overture or at the end of each act when the band is required to play the entr'acte music. He also rings the band when he wants them to end on a coda, to shorten an act-wait when the play is running over the usual time, and patrons are likely to miss their transport home if the curtain falls late at the end of the performance.

**ring up/down.** In many theatres there is a light warning-signal from the prompt corner to the fly platform. A *green* or *red* light (according to the colours decided upon) warns the flymen that the rise (or fall) of the curtain is imminent and the men 'stand by' for the other light (see entry at WARNING AND GO) which tells them to haul the ropes. At one time, and in some theatres still, a bell was the curtain warning, and the terms *ring up* and *ring down* have remained in the stage-managerial vocabulary. 'We'll be *ringing down* five minutes earlier tonight, it's a poor house.'

## rôle

**rôle.** Obsolescent for part, or character. See TITLE RÔLE.

**roller curtain.** The old-fashioned DROP CURTAIN. Now rarely found, except in very old theatres. Rollers were very dangerous, for they came down at speed and were very heavy. The compiler of this glossary remembers—and always with a shudder—a narrow escape from such a curtain, which came down within six inches of his head while he was lying on the stage after being 'shot' by the crook in *The Fourth Wall*. After that incident the 'corpse' preferred to be killed further up-stage.

**rolling stage.** A platform, or two sections of a platform, set on rollers to facilitate quick changes of scenery. One scene is set behind another and rolled down stage when the other is stuck.

**Romantic opera.** An opera written round a legendary figure or theme. e.g. *The Nibelungen Ring* of Wagner, *Prince Igor* of Borodin, and some of the works of Monteverde and Gluck.

**rooms.** The 'superior' artistes' term for PRO DIGS.

**roost.** The top of the gallery. Cf. NIGGER HEAVEN. (American.)

**Roscus.** Descriptive of any brilliant young actor, usually *infant Roscius*. After Quintus Roscius, the Roman actor who, aged about fifty, died in 62 B.C. A friend of Cicero, who defended him in a law suit (*Pro Q. Roscio Comoedo*) he was regarded as the greatest actor of his time, especially in comedy. Eric Partridge in *Name into Word* cites William Betty, who retired in 1824, at the age of thirty-three, as 'The Young Roscius' and adds that *Roscus* has become generic for an outstandingly brilliant actor.

**rostrum.** A portable platform built upon a folding frame, used for Shakespearean and classical plays.

**rotten apple.** An American variant of RASPBERRY. To guy a performance, or individual performer. Used as both verb (to *rotten apple* a play) or noun.

**rouge.** A red cosmetic; a polishing powder used for facial make-up. (French for red.)

**rough-out** (a scene). To erect a set on the stage in order that the positions of windows, doors, fireplaces, etc., can be determined. The decision enables the scenic artist to paint the flats in consonance with the period of the setting.

**round.** Short for *round of applause*. Cf. HANDS.

**round of parts.** Those portrayed by an artiste in nightly repertory. A different part every night.

**round, play for a.** To overact in order to evoke applause. Playing to the gallery.

**roundels.** Footlights so shaped. They are rather uncommon and not popular.

**rounds, do the.** To call upon the round of theatrical agents in London. To call from one to the other after the manner of the milkman on his delivery rounds.

**row.** Short for GROUND-ROW or SEA-ROW.

**Royal Family of Broadway, the.** The famous Barrymore family—Florence, Ethel, John and Lionel—the aristocrats of the New York stage. They reigned long and successfully on Broadway.

**Royal, the.** The Theatre Royal, anywhere. 'I hear you are playing Sheffield next week; are you at the Royal or the Lyceum?' Cf. KING'S, THE.

**rube show.** A drama with a rustic setting. From *Reuben*, a country bumpkin. Cf. HICK.

**run.** The length of a production's run at a theatre or on tour. Theatrical contracts are made for 'the run of the piece'. (2) The duration of the acting time: 'How long does this act (scene) run?' Cf. RUNNING TIME.

**run** (verb). To finance a production or player. 'Who is *running* the show?'

**run a flat.** To move a flat by gripping, with both hands, the stile. One hand grips the leading stile (i.e. the stile facing the direction in which the flat is to be run) by its toggle, the other hand some three feet higher. Thus held, the flat can be balanced and run about the stage with ease.

**runner.** A length of coconut matting placed behind, and at the side of a setting, to deaden the footsteps of artistes walking to and fro to take up positions for their entrance cues. (2) A curtain track.

**run over lines.** To rehearse a part merely for *words*, no expression or intonation being put into them. Just an assurance that one knows the lines. 'Give me a run over for lines.'

**running account.** The stage director's weekly account of all expenditure on properties, the hire of furniture, stage decorations, consumable goods (i.e. tea, sugar, milk, etc. when used on the stage) generally. Stage staff salaries for the week—in fact all expenses connected with the back-stage department and incurred during the running of the show.

## **running time**

**running time.** The actual time the play takes in performance, act by act, excluding intervals and final curtain calls, which are logged separately. See **TIME BOOK** and **TIME THE ACTS**.

**runway.** Also known as the *gangway*. It runs from the stage into the auditorium and is used in musicals when the girls parade through the audience. It is also useful to the producer during rehearsals and saves him making frequent use of the **PASS-DOOR**.

**Ruritania.** This imaginary country is the locale of musical comedy and romantic drama. The name was invented by Anthony Hope in his best-selling novel, and successful play, *The Prisoner of Zenda*. On the analogy of *Aquitania* and *Mauretania*.

**rustic drama.** Any play set in the country and dealing with country people, e.g. Eden Philpott's *The Farmer's Wife*, which gave Sir Cedric Hardwick, as Churdles Ash, the finest character part of the century—and how superbly he played it.

**rustic comic.** A comedian specializing in 'comic farmer' parts in melodrama. Now seldom seen except in burlesques or revue sketches.

## **S**

**S.A.** Short for sex appeal (of actresses).

**Sadler's Wells dip, the.** An Old Pro's term for chalk, with which a dark smudge can be obliterated from a white garment or from an evening-dress shirtfront, the *modus operandi* being an application of white chalk followed by a dash of powder. The Sadler's Wells Theatre was named after the man who, when digging in his garden at Clerkenwell, found an ancient *holy well* which hadn't been used since the Reformation. He founded a Spa and 'Musick House'; the latter afterwards became a theatre. The present Sadler's Wells Theatre is the home of opera and ballet, at popular prices.

**salad parade.** A parade of ballet dancers (American).

**Salzburg.** The rallying point of international opera lovers in early autumn when the festival of Mozart and classical opera is held. Some of the world's finest singers and conductors are engaged to present opera to perfection. The Salzburg Festival has been revived since its cessation during the war years.

**'Sammy' lighting.** Short for the Samoiloff system of stage lighting, the exploitation of red and green complementary colours for the

securing of broad trick effects. From the inventor, Adrian Samoiloff.

**Sammy French.** The firm of Samuel French, Limited, publishers of acting versions of popular plays. See FRENCH EDITION.

**sandbag.** Is used as a weight to keep a brace, or a lamp stand, in position.

**sand-cloth.** A painted stage-cloth representing a road or lane. It is used for exterior scenes.

**sandwich-batten.** Two flat pieces of wood screwed together, with the top edge of a cloth *sandwiched* between them.

**sandwich-man.** One of those pathetic figures seen parading the streets of large cities. He carries two boards—one fore, one aft—on which are pasted double-crown bills advertising the play showing at the local theatre.

**satire.** A play, or sketch, that ridicules certain standards of human behaviour, modes, manners, etc., or lampoons a particular personality. Several of the mordant revue-sketches of Noel Coward, and the plays of Frederick Lonsdale admirably satirized the sensational behaviour of the 'smart set' and 'the bright young people' of the 1920's. In the Greek theatre this form of play was performed with a fantastic background of satyrs.

**save your lights!** Or 'rest your lights!' the order to switch off all unnecessary lighting during an act-wait or at rehearsals.

**Savoyards.** Original members of the famous D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, which presented the popular Gilbert and Sullivan operas, at the Savoy Theatre, London. These operas have remained firm favourites with the public in England and America, and the greatest honour paid to this wonderful partnership of Sir W. S. Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan was the American exhibition of manuscripts, scores, programmes, playbills, and relevant Savoyard matter at the Pierpont Morgan Library. This exhibition was owed to the generosity, and industry of two American gentlemen: Reginald Allen and the late Carrol A. Wilson. Mr Allen's collection was 'on deposit' in the library and, on the day the exhibition opened, Mrs Wilson presented her late husbands' material to the library. Rarities from the Harvard theatre collection and other contributions were lent to the exhibition which was keenly appreciated. The Savoy operas have been increasingly popular with American audiences from 1898 when they were first presented.

## **say one's piece**

**say one's piece.** To speak the lines of one's part. (2) Make a curtain speech.

**scarlet flush, the.** A heavy loss through the failure of a production. The red side of the ledger indicates debt.

**scarper.** To decamp; to leave lodgings without settling the landlady's bill. From the Italian *scappare*, to run away. (Parlyaree.)

**scenario.** A term borrowed from the film industry. It means a synopsis: the plot, characters, and details of a play. Adopted from the Italian.

**scene.** The setting, the painted canvas of the flats, backings, etc. The general 'set-up' of an act in a play. Through French from the Greek *skēnē*, a tent (i.e. booth).

**scene-change.** The striking of one scene and the erection of another.

**scene-dock.** Usually shorted, by stage carpenters, to *dock*. A stowage space at the back, or side, of the stage; scenery, furniture, rostra, etc., are stacked there.

**scene-master.** A master switch on a PRE-SET BOARD.

**scene-painter.** The out-moded term for scenic artist.

**scene-plot.** The diagrammatic blueprint of a production.

**scene-shifter.** A stage-hand employed to move (*shift*) scenery and run flats. Cf. DECK-HAND, GRIP-HAND, and STAGE-HAND.

**scenic artist.** The modern title of the scene painter. Modern décor being what it is, he has to be more skilful and more artistic than his predecessor of the Victorian era.

**scenic effect.** The general appearance of the décor, lighting, costumes, etc., at the dress rehearsal. If approved by the producer, it stands for the run of the production.

**scissors cross.** An awkward movement made by a beginner when crossing the stage. He starts on the wrong foot, his legs crossing, after the manner of a pair of scissors.

**scissors stage.** A stage superimposed on castors, used to expedite changes of scenery. Equal to the proscenium opening in width, and of varying depths, two stages are pivoted at the down-stage corners. While one stage is in use the other can be struck and re-set with a different scene. Sometimes a third stage is used and moved on castors from back-stage in between the open scissors. This type of stage is a substitute for the more convenient revolving stage. Cf. BOAT TRUCK and ROLLING STAGE.

**scoring line.** Where the flats meet each other when cleated together.

**scorpions.** Restless children in an audience, usually at matinées.

## Services Sunday Society

Their *stinging* remarks are 'distracting', to put it mildly, to the artistes. Those who have appeared at children's *matinée* performances of Shakespeare will appreciate this. The term, originally American, is very, very apt.

**Scotch comic.** A Scottish comedian in the traditional manner of the great Sir Harry Lauder.

**scrim.** A gauze cloth that looks transparent when lit from behind.

Literally, *scrim* is a kind of lining cloth. (2) Any rope ends or loose strips of canvas.

**sea-row.** A *ground-row* representing a seascape.

**seals, stick-on.** See STICK-ON SEALS.

**seasonal shop.** An engagement for the summer season in, say, a concert party or in a touring company that visits theatres which open only in the summer months. Also a pantomime engagement during the Christmas season, which lasts until mid-March at some theatres. Cf. SUMMER SHOP.

**second picture.** The second curtain call whilst the **PICTURE** at the first curtain is held.

**secondary lighting.** That which supports the dominant lighting.

(2) The second public supply, or battery system, used in case of a breakdown in the primary public supply system.

**secondary plot.** See SUB PLOT.

**sections.** The circuits in a row of footlights, or light battens. 'Check your blue *section*', Electrics!' Cf. CIRCUIT.

**see and be seen.** The slogan of the fashionable opera-goers at, say, the Metropolitan Opera House, New York, or at one of the European Festivals. These functions are as much a fashion parade as an operatic feast.

**send out** (into the country). To send a company on a provincial tour. The production has to be a 'Chinese copy' of the metropolitan production, with the mannerisms, intonations and business faithfully copied by the touring artistes.

**sentimental comedy.** A mawkish play marked by stilted dialogue and inept characterization. This type of play originated in the *comédie larmoyante*, 'sob drama' in a middle-class setting.

**Services Sunday Society.** Formed at the end of the second world war to help actors and actresses, demobilized from the British Forces, to re-establish themselves in their profession by re-introducing their names, and work, to managements that had forgotten them during the war years.

## **set**

**set.** Short for stage *setting*, or the scenery. (2) (verb) To erect a scene. 'When the curtain comes down, *set* Act I for tomorrow's *matinée*.' (3) To switch on stage lights.

**set back to the wall.** To erect a scene as near as possible to the back wall of the stage. In a small theatre with a narrow stage a scene has necessarily to be set as far back as possible to avoid its encroaching on to the apron.

**set lights.** The electrician and his 'boys' light the scenes according to the plot at the LIGHT REHEARSAL. To *set* means to 'switch on' the stage lighting at any time, whether at the performance or at rehearsal. The order '*Set your lights!*' is given by the stage director a few minutes before the rise of the curtain on an act or scene, and all lights on the plot go on, except those that are brought on at a cue after the act has opened. Footlights, spot-, and floodlights, backing lights, 'strips', 'lengths' are all *set* as soon as the OVERTURE commences. Contrast FIX LIGHTS.

**set up.** To erect scenery and furnish a setting. (2) As a hyphenated noun, the *plot* of a play: 'It is a queer *set-up* but actable.'

**set piece.** A small setting within a setting: for example, the gable of a house, entrance gates, a balcony, an outhouse. Generally used to heighten perspective.

**setting.** The scene when built upon the stage. *Décor*, furniture, etc.

**setting line.** A fixed line down-stage near the apron. This is determined by the positions of the Number One lighting batten and the spotlight bar.

**settle.** To obtain an engagement. 'I have just *settled* for the new show at the Palace.' ('Touring companies' and vaudeville artistes'.)  
Cf. FIX.

**seven movements in ballet.** (1) *plier*, to bend. (2) *étendre*, to stretch. (3) *relever*, to raise. (4) *glisser*, to glide. (5) *sauter*, to jump. (6) *élancer*, to dart. (7) *tourner*, to turn.

**seven unknown languages of the stage.** A reference to the odd attempts at dialect in regional plays. Cf. MUMMERS-*SETSHIRE*.

**sexational.** A punning adjective descriptive of a *sensational sex* play. (A journalistic coinage.)

**Shakespeareance.** Experience in Shakespearean repertory. Most actors in the front rank today owe much to this kind of acting in their stage apprenticeship under the tutelage of such managers as the late Sir Frank R. Benson, the late Henry Baynton, Charles Doran and, in recent years, Donald Woolfit, who has carried on

the tradition. Their companies have toured the English provinces and filled the theatres. A visit of F. R. Benson was an event of the utmost importance, and his pupil, Henry Baynton was equally popular during the 1920's. With a fine presence and delivery, Baynton was earmarked for a great career, but he retired from management in his thirties. He made sporadic appearances in minor rôles in London, his last important part being in the musical comedy *The Vagabond King*. He died in the winter.

Artistes who had their *Shakespeareance* under these important managements owe them much. See entries at BAY and PA.

**shamateurs.** A conflation of *sham amateurs*. Unsuccessful ex-professional artistes who, having failed to make a living on the 'stage proper', act in amateur dramatic societies.

**shatter prices.** To reduce the prices of seats when a production is not doing well. See **TWOFERS**.

**Shavian.** The epigrammatic, hyperbolic style associated with the dialogue in the plays of George Bernard Shaw.

**sheet.** The box-office seating plans. In the plural: posters, playbills, etc. A *six-sheet* is six times the size of a **DOUBLE-CROWN** poster, equivalent to six sheets.

**Sheng.** In the Chinese theatre, one who plays the hero, the heavy father or even a **WALKING GENTLEMAN**.

**shoe.** A toggle. (2) An electrical plug board which allows several units to be fed from one service. Cf. **WAY-BOARD**.

**shop.** A theatrical engagement. The past participle of the verb means that one has fixed an engagement. 'So and So has just got himself *shopped* for panto.' (Obsolescent; now used mainly by old-timers in the profession.)

**shop, seasonal.** See **SEASONAL SHOP**.

**short.** A short circuit. (Electricians'.)

**show.** A colloquial term for a play or, indeed, any production. When first introduced into theatre speech it was frowned upon by conservative people, but the term is now, by many, accepted as standard English.

**show-box.** The theatre. A provincial actor's term, dating from the days of the *peep-show* (*box*). The Sunday evening routine of the old touring actors was to discover the whereabouts of the *show-box*, the general post office, and the actors' pub.

**show business,** meaning the entire theatre industry, dates from

## **showmanship**

1887 and is American in origin. A song of that title was featured in the successful musical, *Annie Get your Gun*.

**showmanship.** The flair for producing spectacular musicals, or pageantry generally. (2) The parading of an outstanding (theatrical) personality.

**show must go on, the.** The traditional slogan of the TROUPERS. Whatever tragedy may enter the life of a player, or however ill he may feel, it is a point of honour not to let the other players down by deserting them when no understudy is available. Cf. DISCIPLINE and WE NEVER CLOSED.

**show people.** Generic for *theatricals*, the American version of the English PROS.

**showy part.** One providing opportunities for fine delivery and for the display of acting ability. Cf. MEATY.

**shrieking ostrich.** An elaboration of the BIRD. 'The show got a *shrieking ostrich* at Blackpool.'

**shutter dance.** One performed on a slatted platform which emphasizes the tapped-out rhythm.

**shutters.** In spot-, and floodlights, reduce the area of the light beam.

**sides.** Pages of an artiste's part, which are typed on one side only.

**sidewalk artistes.** Those ambitious, and frequently out-of-work, players who gossip on the pavements of New York.

**siffleur.** A whistling artiste in vaudeville (French).

**sight cue.** See SILENT CUE.

**signals.** Curtain, or any warnings given by light, or by bell from the prompt corner. See entry at CUE-BOARD and WARNING AND GO.

**silent cue.** One given by means of stage business, or by a time lapse.

Not a *spoken* cue. The stage direction may be: 'As Nora moves up-stage R, after tearing up the letter, George enters through door L.' As the player who is to make the entrance may not be able to see this 'silent cue', he usually takes the signal from the assistant stage manager, who will observe Nora's movement through a spy hole in the flat, or say, the fire-place opening.

**sill.** A flat, iron bar, with the top rounded to prevent people from tripping, connecting the base of the opening of door-pieces, or french-windows. One inch wide by a quarter of an inch thick, sill irons are screwed to the back of these pieces and countersunk into the base rail.

**silly ass part.** See DUDE.

**Simon Legree.** The American term for a stage manager. From the

## **skin of the part, the**

slave-driving, sadistic, slave-owner of that name in Mrs H. B. Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

**sing us a song!** A call from the gallery when an artiste is disappointed of. This exhortation is euphemistic for something grosser. Ask any old Pro.

**singer's farewell.** The oft-repeated farewell performance of famous PRIMA DONNAS, and TENORS. Unlike the 'soldiers' farewell', it has little finality about it.

**singing ensemble.** The full chorus of a musical comedy.

**singing ladies and gentlemen.** A fanciful replacement of the more expressive word *chorus*.

**single act.** A solo performance in vaudeville. e.g. a ballad singer, a juggler, an acrobat, an impersonator, or a *raconteur*. Cf. DOUBLE ACT.

**sinks.** Stage traps or any portion of the stage capable of being lowered (sunk) into the cellar.

**sister-act.** A variety act performed by two or more sisters; e.g. the famous *Dolly Sisters*, the singing *Green Sisters* of the stage and radio.

**situation.** The position in which the players find themselves in relation to the plot at any time during the action of the play.

**size.** A thin glue, or a gelatine, solution used by scenic artists, and stage carpenters, for the glazing and stiffening of canvas flats. The word comes from the Italian *sis*a, diminutive of *assisa*, painter's glue, and ultimately from the verb *assidere*, to make to lie, or sit down, from the Latin *assidere*. The smell of this solution, though extremely pungent, is as nostalgic as that of grease-paint to the stage artiste.

**sizzle for.** See PASH IT.

**skate.** Part of a setting that can be slid (skated) into position for clearing.

**sketch.** A playlet in a revue or as a music-hall turn.

**skit.** A short, satirical play in vaudeville or a revue. Of unknown origin.

**skin.** An animal skin, e.g. of a cat, monkey, goose, used by 'animal' artistes in Christmas pantomimes.

**skin of the part, the.** When an actor thoroughly knows his lines and is 'well firmed' in characterization, he is said to have 'got into the *skin of the part*'. The phrase has its origin in pantomime animal artiste's donning the skin of the cat in *Dick Whittington*. This excellent metaphor has been adopted into standard English.

## skip

**skip.** A hamper or property basket. A variant of *skep*, a basket, the word comes from Old Norse *skeppa* or from the German *scheffel*, a bushel (hence a basket to hold that measure). (2) To dance, hence *skippers*, stage dancers (American). “

**slap.** Make-up materials: grease-paints, powder, rouge, etc. *slapped* on to the face.

**slapstick.** Short for *slapstick comedy*: broad, knock-about comedy. From the harlequin's wand. See PANTOMIME.

**slapstickery.** Slapstick comedy business, broad farce, or stage fooling generally.

**slate.** To criticize severely, to condemn a play on the grounds of inadequacy or ineptitude. ‘In spite of the *slating* in the press, the play ran for six months.’ The conservative etymologist Skeat derives *slate* from the Anglo-Saxon *slaetan*, to bait, set the dogs on (an animal), a causal verb from *slitan*, to slit, tear, rend; although H. C. Wyld—an admirable scholar—thinks the connection with *slaetan* improbable, Webster agrees with Skeat; Ernest Weekley suggests a relationship with the old Irish practice of ‘bonneting’, ramming an opponent's ‘slate’ over his eyes, *slate* being a variant of *tile*, the slang for hat.

**slay** (an audience). A music-hall ‘comic’ is said to *slay* his audience when he reduces them to helpless laughter.

**slick ham.** A well turned-out and ‘polished’ provincial actor.

**slinger.** A prompter who *slings* the lines across the stage from the prompt corner, to one who has dried up.

**slip a programme.** To place a printed *slip* inside a programme when there is a change in the cast. If a star, or one of the principals falls ill the slip will read: ‘Owing to the indisposition of So and So, the part of Charles will be played at this performance by WALTER PLINGE.’

**sloat.** ‘An apparatus, generally of wood, consisting of two, or more, parallel rails erected perpendicularly, or at an angle wherein a set of bearers may be raised by means of a winch, or weights, carrying a scenic piece, platform, person, etc. It is used with stage traps, special effects. The *sloat* is also known as a boot.’ (Strand Electric Glossary.)

**slow’ clapping.** Indicative of disapproval. A decorous BIRD.

**smash hit.** A huge success. A long-running play or musical comedy, that *breaks* all records.

**small part man/woman.** One who always plays the subsidiary

parts in London or New York productions. One specializing in the creation of minor, though often very important rôles.

**smalls.** The *small* dates. Cf. the American STICKS and TANKS, and contrast FIT-UP and ONE-NIGHT STANDS.

**snow-box.** A pierced sack stretched over a wooden frame (*box*) and filled with finely clipped paper. Suspended from a SET OF LINES and masked by a border, the box is swayed slowly, the paper falling from the holes in the sack and producing the desired snow effect. The *snow-box* was in frequent use in melodrama, when, in the 'strong' scene, the erring daughter returned to the old home bearing the 'wages of sin' in her arms. She collapsed on the snow-covered doorstep and the flakes fell heavily on her dejected and penitent figure.

**snow brown.** To substitute an article for a missing property on the stage. When a man working the snow-box ran out of white paper he substituted brown. Cf. VAMP.

**soap, drop.** To drop a piece of soap in the dressing-room is considered unlucky, as it is to leave one's soap behind when packing on Saturday night on tour.

**soap opera.** A radio version of either a play or a musical, (originally American). The American sense explains the origin: 'a radio serial drama offered on a daytime commercial programme chiefly for housewives' (Webster).

**soap over.** All mirrors and surfaces reflecting light on to an audience are smeared with soap to prevent the reflection of foot, or overhead lights being seen from the front.

**sob stuff.** Sentimental or 'weepie' drama popular with Victorian audiences. *East Lynn*, *A Woman's Love*, and similar fare.

**sock and buskin, the.** Generic for the drama or acting generally. From the sock (Latin *soccus*), the light shoe worn by the Greek and Roman comic actors, and the half-boot (Italian *borzachino*, from the Latin *borsa*) worn by tragic actors.

**social comedy.** One dealing with 'Society' life; DRAWING-ROOM COMEDY.

**society drama.** One set in a 'society' atmosphere.

**soffit.** The lower part of an arch or a balcony architrave. It gives depth.

**sold out.** Every seat in the theatre occupied and standing room full. Cf. HOUSE FULL and TURN AWAY MONEY.

**solid.** Describes a competent, though not brilliant, actor. One who

## **soliloquize**

never forgets a line, or piece of stage business, and is a tower of strength to the cast. An all-round TROUPER.

**soliloquize.** To talk to oneself (on the stage) as Hamlet in his famous soliloquies.

**soliloquy.** A lone speech. Latin *solus*, alone, and *loqui*, speak.

**solus.** An artiste who is *alone*. Feminine *sola*, an actress alone on the stage.

**soprano.** The highest register in women or boys. 'From middle C to the A, an octave and a sixth above. The *mezzo-soprano* has a compass lying about a third below that of a soprano, but the tone is fuller, richer, and softer' (Jeffrey Pulver).

**sorry performer.** A mediocre artiste (actor's colloquial).

**sotie.** A broad farcical comedy popular in the French theatre during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

**soubrette.** The 'singing chambermaid' in melodrama. This stock character has existed since Congreve's *Way of the World*, with Mincing and Foible, the maidservants.

**souvenir.** An illustrated booklet of a popular play, provided *gratis* to the audience on the occasion of a centenary, bicentenary, or tercentenary performance.

**Spanish guitar.** A cigar. Rhyming slang of the music halls.

**sparge pipe.** See DRENCHER PIPE. From the Latin *spargere*, to sprinkle.

**Sparks.** The nickname for any one of the electrician's staff. The usual term, however, is 'Electrics'.

**spec.** Short for *spectacle*, or *speculation*. American originally but now general in England. 'Putting on that leg-show was a good *spec*.'

**speciality artiste.** A vaudeville artiste who specializes in impersonations, juggling, etc.

**spectacle.** Any impressive display or scene. e.g. the FINALE of a pantomime.

**spectacular drama.** One full of sensation and colourful scenery and effects.

**speech.** More than half a dozen lines in stage dialogue is considered a *speech*. Cf. LINES.

**speech, broken.** An interjection, e.g. 'Yes, I know, but . . .' It cuts into (*breaks*) another's speech. To be effective, a broken speech must be taken up quickly, otherwise it falls flat and the speaker looks foolish.

**spill.** The 'throw' of light from a spot lantern or a stage flood.

**spit black.** See WATER BLACK and EYE BLACK.

**split week.** One during which a touring company plays at two dates. Monday to Wednesday in one town; Thursday to Saturday in the next. Such bookings occur in the small seaside towns, e.g. Cromer, Hunstanton, and many of the small inland towns where the audiences are not large enough to justify a full week's booking.

**Spokeshave.** Jocular for Shakespeare (Shakespearean actors).

**sponge bags.** Trousers made of black and white check, worn with a black morning coat, a style very *de rigueur* in the early 1920's, and the mark of the successful actor. The jacket was short, and white spats were worn with the trousers, over black patent-leather shoes. The pattern of the material of which the trousers were made resembled that used for *sponge bags* popular at that time.

**Spoonerism.** An accidental transposition of words or letters. e.g. 'Worms have died and men have eaten them,' instead of 'Men have died, etc.', or 'thud and blunder' instead of 'blood and thunder'. The term commemorates the late Rev. W. A. Spooner, Oxonian, who had a tendency to commit such linguistic lapses.

**spot.** An engagement. A part in a play. The American variant of the English SHOP.

**spot batten.** See SPOT BAR.

**spot bar.** The TUMBLER batten on which the spotlight lanterns and the floods are fixed.

**spot broker.** An American booking-agent for plays and artistes. Cf. SPOT and FLESH PEDLAR.

**spot frost.** A frosted gelatine with a hole in the centre to give greater light transmission from the centre.

**spotlight-chaser.** One whose egotistic tendencies make him seek the centre of the stage. A LIMELIGHT HOG. Cf. FOOTLIGHT FANNY.

**spot-line.** Is a line from the grid to the flies; used for supporting chandeliers and similar objects.

**spotting-attachment.** A lens attached to a spot-lantern to intensify the beam.

**spread.** To enlarge the diameter of a spotlight beam.

**spread a part.** To play it on broader lines than was originally produced. One *spreads* comedy in towns where audiences like such technique and where the subtlety would be wasted.

**Spring tour.** Runs from January to June. Cf. SUMMER TOUR and AUTUMN TOUR.

## **sprinklers**

**sprinklers.** Nozzles in the stage ceiling, close to the grid, which are operated by the hydraulic system, or by a fusible link, on the outbreak of fire. Cf. DRENCHER PIPE.

**spirit gum.** An adhesive solution for fixing false beards.

**spirit-gum part.** One that requires the wearing of a beard which is made from crêpe hair and stuck on with spirit gum.

**spy drama.** Any drama dealing with intrigue and espionage.

**squared paper.** Drawing paper, ruled in inches and twelfths, used for sketching ground plans of scenes. The standard scale for stage design is half an inch to a foot. A large square on the paper would equal one foot, and a small one two inches.

**S.R.O.** Standing room only.

**S'roswald.** A nickname-slurring of the late *Sir Oswald Stoll*, who built the London Coliseum and popularized the music halls in the provinces. Sir Oswald was a severe stickler for propriety and allowed nothing that was tinted with the palest shade of 'blue' in the programmes at his theatres, and peccant performers were given very short shrift. This censorious attitude may have been due to his being entirely without a sense of humour. Sir Oswald was formidably respectable and greatly respected, and a theatre bearing his name stands in Kingsway, London. W. Macqueen Pope, in his delightful *An Indiscreet Guide to Theatreland* (Muse Arts, Ltd) gives an admirable 'profile' of *S'roswald*.

**tag mag.** Short for *stage manager*. By reduplication. Also, as a verb, to *stage manage*.

**stage board.** The *stage switchboard*, as distinct from a remote-control switchboard.

**Stage Censorship.** Before a play can be produced in London, or in the provinces, it must be passed by the Lord Chamberlain and properly licensed, to prove that it is free from salaciousness or lines that might offend. Though this censorship is admirable up to a point, opinions differ as to what constitutes the 'censorable'; and many playwrights have, in the past, been penalized for what today would pass without giving offence. There is a freedom of words allowed in print that may not be permitted in the spoken word, though in recent years censors have been more inclined to pass words that have hitherto been taboo. But what would be innocuous on the London stage may often offend in provincial towns where a Watch Committee is appointed to attend first nights of touring versions of London plays. There has been some

## stage-door Johnny

agitation on the part of Equity and other societies for the abolition of Stage Censorship following a debate in the House of Commons; but, so far, the censorship remains.

**stage-cloth.** A cloth (often an old sail) that covers the setting area over which carpets are laid. The stage-cloth covers the bare boards of the stage.

**stage clothes.** Clothes worn *on the stage* only. Dresses, or suits, worn in the part. In the West End musical comedies these clothes are provided by the management, but artistes on the legitimate stage usually have to provide their own wardrobes. Cf. STREET CLOTHES.

**stage curate.** See STAGE PARSON.

**stage death.** A dying upon the stage. It calls for a most delicate and 'subdued' acting if it is not to create bathos by the over-playing. It is a most difficult technique and few actors are good at stage deaths. One actor, however, named Hicks, was so convincing in death scenes that he earned the sobriquet 'Die-again Hicks'.

**stage depth.** The depth of the stage, measured from the setting line near the footlights to the back wall, when the stage is empty.

**stage dip.** A plug set in a square trap some five inches under the stage floor. *Dips* can be operated on resistance (dimmers) from the main switchboard, and their main advantage is that they help to reduce the amount of *scrim* (long leads, etc.) on the stage.

**S.D.** Short for:

**Stage Director.** Until recent years he was known as the stage manager, and is still so addressed by conservative people. He is the producer's right-hand man and next in authority during rehearsals of a production, and is in sole charge of the stage once the play is running. His duties are manifold, the main ones being the supervision of scenery, the arrangement of lighting and property plots, the engagement of the stage staff, etc. He is assisted in these duties by a stage manager (formerly known as the *assistant stage manager*), and maybe an A.S.M. (q.v.) to whom he delegates such work as the checking of lights and plots, prompting, and the several traditional jobs carried out by assistant stage managers. The desiderata of a stage director are efficiency, patience, tact, and a sense of humour.

**stage door.** That through which all artistes, and back-stage staff enter the theatre. Cf. PASS DOOR.

**stage-door Johnny.** The Victorian buck (man-about-town) who haunted the stage door of the Gaiety Theatre, London, during the

## **stage doorkeeper**

heyday of the George Edwardes's régime when some of the most beautiful women of the day were members of the chorus.

**stage doorkeeper.** It is said to be as difficult to pass a stage doorkeeper as to enter Buckingham Palace. Certainly they are an uncompromising class of men. Indeed, they have to be, for the number of besiegers at any stage door after the first night of a play starring a public favourite is amazing. Stage doorkeepers are credited with knowing the 'secrets of everybody, and divulging none. Be that as it may, they are as one in withholding the private addresses of artistes, and refusing admittance back-stage to anyone not producing written credentials, or without first finding out whether the artiste they wish to see would welcome the callers. The stage doorkeeper is also the custodian of the keys of all dressing-rooms when the latter are not in use. He is also the deliverer of the company's mail. His office, just inside the stage door, usually has its walls covered with signed photographs of stars past and present. It is not uncommon to find that a stage doorkeeper is an ex-dresser.

**stage-door lounge.** One who hangs around the stage door of a revue theatre in the hope of 'getting off' with one of the chorus girls when they leave the theatre. The term is also applied to an autograph hunter.

**stage duchess.** An actress whose deportment is so *grand* as to be untrue. Like the stage Irishman, the type is 'seldom met in real life. Such characters are comparable to those in the 'Society' novels that were popular in the '90's.

**stage etiquette.** Is most strictly observed, and severely censured are those who violate its canons. Seniority counts in the theatre, and the stage director's prompt corner is sacrosanct: no artiste, from the leading player to the small-part artiste, would dream of entering it, or of passing through on to the stage, without asking formal permission of the S.D. Permission is also asked of the stage director to have guests on the stage, for he is in sole charge of the stage and responsible for anything that happens thereon. Artistes are usually punctilious in thanking the call boy when he calls the acts, or themselves individually; there is then no excuse if the artistes are late for entrances. The boy has been thanked, and that constitutes a check, but the stage director always makes sure that the boy calls a second time if there is danger of an artiste being off. The dressing-rooms are allocated 'in order of seniority',

## Stage Letterbox

but people with quick changes of clothing are given rooms conveniently near the stage, even when this violates the privilege of the stars. Such allocation is never, or seldom, questioned by good troupers. The heads of departments: master carpenter, master electrician, and the property master, run their own staff, and, as long as the work is efficiently carried out by those departments, they are not interfered with. The *front of the house* staff is the province of the business manager, and the stage manager has no jurisdiction over them. As a rule theatres are run very pleasantly and smoothly, thanks to this traditional etiquette that has promoted a wonderful team spirit.

**stage flex.** Double, or treble cored cable heavily insulated with a braid covering. It is chiefly used between large-wattage portable equipment and the stage dip boxes.

**Stage Golfing Society.** The address of this society is: 90 St Martin's Lane, London, W.C.2.

**stage gossip.** The chit chat and scandal (usually the denigration of players more fortunate than the gossipers) of the dressing-rooms, and in 'theatre street' generally. At one time it was known as GREEN-ROOM GOSSIP.

**stage-hand.** A scene shifter, or one assisting the property master. Cf. DECK-HAND and GRIP-HAND. Adopted from the nautical *hand*, a sailor on the lower deck, who has one hand for the King and one for himself.

**stage, hold the.** To 'grip' an audience. To have complete control of oneself and one's fellow players. Applied to a well-disciplined performance respected by artistes and audience alike. 'The audience was *held* from start to finish, a remarkably fine performance' (press review).

**stage Irishman.** An exaggerated 'Paddy'. Like the stage parson, this caricature was a convention of the Victorian stage.

**Stage Letterbox.** Under this heading a list of names is published each week in *The Stage* newspaper of people to whom letters have been addressed care of the Editor. The addressees may either call at *The Stage* office or send for their correspondence. This courtesy on the part of the proprietors is much appreciated by artistes who are often able to get in touch with those whose addressees they have misplaced, and very often a manager wishing to have a certain artiste in a new production may make contact with him through the *Stage Letterbox*. See STAGE, THE.

## **stage lighting**

**stage lighting.** Cannot be adequately treated in a dictionary although several important terms are listed. For a conspectus of the subject the reader is recommended to consult the standard text books. *The Technique of Stage Lighting* by Gïlespie Williams, T.I.E.S., published in London by Sir Isaac Pitman, Limited, is specially recommended.

**stage make-up.** The term used by artistes to differentiate between the make-up used on the stage itself and the much lighter make-up used outside the theatre. Cf. STREET MAKE-UP.

**Stage Manager.** One of the hardest worked men in the theatre. The 'buffer' between the stage director and the heads of departments. For the first few weeks of a 'run' he, in addition to 'working the corner', holds the prompt book of which he has been in charge since the beginning of rehearsals, marking the business, and noting such suggestions as are made by the producer. When artistes have settled into their parts, the S.M. (as he is known) may hand over the book to his assistant, though he himself will remain in charge of the prompt corner. During the act-changes, the setting, furniture and properties are checked by the stage manager, who will ring up the curtain on the next act when he is sure that all is ready, and the artistes have taken their positions on the stage. Other stage managerial duties are referred to throughout this work.

**stage parson.** Is often a caricature of the genuine article. A prototype of all stage parsons being *Spalding* ('a bath bun and a glass of milk') in the old farce, *The Private Secretary*.

**stage plugs.** See DIPS.

**stage policeman.** Like the stage Irishman he is a 'figure of fun', except in thrillers when he conforms to the conventional theatrical type of *straight* P.C. with slow, deliberate movements, and, of course, the notebook and pencil.

**stage props.** Properties used on the stage, e.g. furniture, ornaments, etc. Cf. HAND PROPS.

**stage screw.** A large hand screw for securing braces and for the fixing of scenery to the stage floor.

**stage-struck.** Suffering from the desire to 'go on the stage', the itch to act, encouraged by anything to do with the theatre. Also known as 'stage fever'.

**'Stage, The.'** The theatrical newspaper published at 19 Tavistock Street, London, W.C.2. It is the voice of the profession, and

## **stand by.**

contains all information concerning productions in London and the provinces. It covers theatre events in America and the Colonies. Published weekly, *The Stage* gives a list of the companies on tour, and several columns of advertisements, including 'Artistes Wanted', 'Engagements Wanted', and 'Artistes Cards', also the very useful Stage Letterbox. *The Stage* has superseded the defunct *Era*, as the ACTOR'S BIBLE.

**stage trap.** The traditional pantomime trap on the stage through which the Demon King springs into view. (2) It is also used as a *grave trap* in Hamlet.

**stage voice.** That used by stage artistes. It is pitched stronger than off-stage to ensure its being audible in every part of the house. Cf. DELIVERY and PITCH.

**stage wait.** A hold-up in a performance due to a player's missing an entrance cue. The stage *waits* for the artiste to appear, and often there is a complete *dry-up* because the next lines depend upon the absentee.

**stage whisper.** A *sotto voce* aside or remark that can be heard in every part of the theatre, although the words are spoken in an (apparent) whisper.

**stage width.** Is measured from side wall to side wall on an empty stage.

**stagey.** Theatrical in manner and dress. Cf. THEATRICAL.

**stalls.** Short for orchestra stalls, the seats between the orchestra and the pit.

**stalls/circle bar.** The bar used by patrons of the dress circle and the stalls. This bar is frequently used for rehearsals on non-matinée days, or in the forenoon.

**stall-pot** (often in the plural). A very 'big pot' (i.e. important person) occupying a seat in the stalls (exclusively a music-hall term).

**stance.** The position in which one stands on the stage. The posture for, say, the delivery of a fairly long speech, or a Shakespearean soliloquy.

**standard.** A flood lantern mounted on a telescopic stand. It is used for lighting cloths and backings.

**stand by!** A warning from the stage director to artistes that the curtain is about to be rung up and that they are to take up their positions on the stage for the opening of the act. A variant of this warning is 'PLACES, PLEASE!'

## **standers**

**standers.** Patrons who have paid for 'standing room only'. See S.R.O.

**standing set.** A scene that *stands* throughout the play and is not struck when the curtain falls. It is built for the run of the play. A stage manager's dream. Cf. PERMANENT SET.

**star.** An actor or actress in public favour. They are *starred* for quality. (2) As a verb: to feature in a play, or film; to play the leading (*star*) part.

**star bill.** One advertising the artiste, in large letters. The title of the play appears in much smaller letters, and the author's name in even smaller.

**star dressing-room.** The best dressing-room in the theatre. The one nearest the stage is allotted to the leading lady or the leading man.

**star gaze** (of the public). To stand outside a theatre at a premier performance watching the galaxy of stage, or film, stars who are usually present on these 'SEE AND BE SEEN' occasions.

**star in a night.** An artiste who achieves fame by an outstandingly brilliant performance on the first night of a London production. In one night she establishes her STARDOM.

**star letters.** The large letters in the name of the star on a playbill. Cf. STAR BILL.

**star part.** One given to, and not infrequently written for, a player with a name.

**star queller.** A clumsy actor whose slow movements and bad acting worry the leading player.

**star rôle.** See STAR PART, STELLAR RÔLE.

**star system.** That by which plays are written round the personalities of an actor or actress, so that such a part is a typical *So and So* part. A review of a play featuring George Arliss read: 'Mr George Arliss was very good as George Arliss in a typical George Arliss part.' Cf. TYPE CAST.

**star trap.** The stage *trap*-doors on the left- and right-hand sides of the stage near the footlight trough. The lids are built in sections to open in the shape of a star. They are used in pantomime.

**star turn.** A popular music-hall act by a favourite comedian. Also said of any comic situation off-stage. 'It was a real *star turn*, believe me!'

**starlet.** A child star in a play or a film.

**State Theatre.** A theatre run by the State, as opposed to a private

theatre. Most European opera houses (e.g. The Berlin State Opera House) are State controlled.

**stationery.** Free tickets. A synonym of PAPER.

**stays.** Wooden wedges that keep flats firmly in position after they have been erected and cleated.

**steal the spot.** To occupy the centre of the stage and so usurp the privilege of the leading players. Cf. LIMELIGHT HOG and SPOTLIGHT CHASER.

**steal the thunder.** To out-act the star and filch his applause. The phrase originated from one John Dennis (1657-1734), who invented thunder for a play of his which was a failure and damned by all the critics. A few months afterwards Dennis saw, at Drury Lane, a play in which there was a storm scene and his own thunder invention was utilized. He complained that though his own play was not allowed to run, they might have asked *him* before stealing his thunder.

**stellardom.** See STARDOM. The condition of being a STAR.

**stellar rôle.** A fanciful variant of STAR RÔLE. See STAR PART.

**step on the laughs.** To speak on top of a laugh-line, thus killing its efficacy. Cf. KILL A LAUGH.

**steward.** An official who acts as usher, and answers queries, at a private theatre. At the Glynedebourne Opera in pre-war days there were a number of these functionaries whose job was a combination of 'gentleman usher' and cicerone. The word derives from the Anglo-Saxon *stig*, house (sty), and *weard*, ward. Literally a *styward*, one who looked after the (general catering) of the house.

**stick.** To dry-up; to BALLOON, MAKE AN ASCENSION (American). To forget one's lines and suffer from complete aphasia. Literally *stuck* for the words, and incapable of PONGING.

**stick on lines.** An elaboration of the preceding.

**stick-on seals.** Are placed in the margin of a prompt book to indicate important cues and effects, the nature of which is written against the seal in blue or red pencil. Blue indicates the WARNING, red the GO: e.g. 'Warn door-slam'; 'Call Silvia'.

**sticks, in the.** Touring the provinces. (An American term.)

**stiff.** The reverse of reposeful. Stage beginners hold themselves stiffly and look ill at ease until their self-consciousness wears off with experience. The arms are tensed instead of being held naturally and easily, movements are awkward, and the chin is

- apt to fall instead of being held level with the dress circle.* Dramatic schools have done much to lessen this stiffness in beginners. But before the advent of these institutions, novices came to the stage 'green' and took several weeks to overcome their audience-shyness.
- still.** A photograph depicting a scene in a play. 'The *stills* look good, let's go in and see the show.' From film jargon. The *still*, not the motion picture.
- stock company.** A touring, or a resident, company carrying a *stock* of the standard dramas.
- stock gag.** A time-worn wisecrack.
- stock line.** A cliché line in drama or a revue; e.g., 'You may break your mother's heart, but you won't break mine' (the stage sergeant-major).
- stooge.** A FEED (sense 1).
- Stoops.** Short for *She Stoops to Conquer* by Oliver Goldsmith (reper-tory artistes').
- stop-gap.** A revival of an old play put on at a theatre as a *stop-gap* between the end of one production and the beginning of another. It helps to pay the rent and the running costs.
- stop the show.** A comedian is said to *stop the show* when his gags cause prolonged laughter, and the show cannot proceed until the laughter dies down. 'That gag of Danny Kaye's *stopped the show*.'
- straight actor.** One accustomed to play on the legitimate stage.
- straight part.** A speaking part in a drama or a comedy. Any rôle that is not sung.
- straight play.** A drama, a comedy, or a farce. A non-musical production.
- stranded.** Destitute in a town in consequence of a company's inability to pay salaries, or to settle the local theatre expenses; or deserted by a bogus management. Cf. DRY-UP COMPANY.
- street clothes.** A player's private wardrobe, as distinct from the clothing he wears on the stage. Cf. DRESS WELL ON AND OFF and GOOD MODERN WARDROBE.
- street make-up.** An actress' term for the lighter make-up she wears off the stage. Cf. STAGE MAKE-UP.
- strike.** To dismantle a setting at the end of an act, and clear it off the stage into the scene-dock, or stack it at the sides of the stage for its use at a later period in the play. There is sometimes a very

short interval in which to **strike** one set and erect another. 'Hurry up, boys, this is a three-minute *strike*.' (2) 'To light an arc projector by closing and then opening the electrode.' (*The Circle*, November issue)

**strip.** To place a *strip* of canvas across the back of a flat that is wearing thin and so prevent the possibility of any light showing through.

**strip tease.** A vaudeville act in which a female dancer divests herself of successive articles of clothing and is saved from ultimate 'shame' by a crucial black-out.

**stroller.** A strolling player. (Obsolete.) (2) *The Stroller*, the pen-name of the writer of a theatrical causerie in a London newspaper.

**strong actor.** A drama man accustomed to broad technique and the old style of delivery. AN ACTOR LADDY.

**strong play.** A heavy domestic drama, or a controversial sex play. Examples: *Desire under the Elms*; *No Room at the Inn*; or the old-fashioned sob-drama with a Surrey-side flavour: *The Silver King*, *The Manxman*, *The Worst Woman in London*, and the like.

**strong scene.** Any highly dramatic, or sentimental scene that appeals to the gallery.

**strut.** A wooden supporting brace for scenery.

**study, good/bad.** A player with a retentive memory who learns a part quickly and thoroughly, or one who has a poor memory and holds up the rest of the company at rehearsals. See SWALLOW.

**sub.** An advance of salary (*subsistence* money). The classic 'chestnut' is told of an indigent actor who asked his manager for a small *sub* to enable him to have a shave. When asked what part he was to play that evening, the man replied *Hamlet*. 'Then you will play Othello,' ordered the manager. Another fit-up actor, who had the temerity to ask the manager for the sub of a sovereign, was told that 'If I had a sovereign, laddy, I'd have another company on the road.'

**subordinates.** The subordinate rôles in a play. Cf. TAIL and SUPPORTING CAST.

**sub plot.** The *subsidiary* plot of a drama or any other play.

**suburbs, playing/working.** Touring the outlying districts of London, or the big cities. Legitimate companies *play* theatres; vaudeville and musical-comedy shows *work* them.

**succès d'estime.** An artistic success acclaimed by the press but bringing little monetary advantage to the playwright.

## **sugar daddy**

**sugar daddy.** An elderly businessman who takes out chorus girls.

*Sugar* means 'money' in American slang. Hence, *big sugar* means monetary success in the theatre.

**suitcase drama.** A touring play presented with the barest of scenery. The décor and wardrobe can be carried in suitcases from village to village.

**suite de danses.** Several dances connected by mood and music, but not by theme; e.g., *Les Sylphides*.

**summer shop.** Cf. SEASONAL SHOP.

**Summer Theatre.** One that is regarded as a 'holiday date' and which usually closes at the end of September, or in mid-October at the latest. The seaside theatres which book SPLIT WEEK companies.

**summer tour.** One running from May, or June, to late September or October. On these tours the company is booked by the seaside, or inland Spa, theatres, and the smaller towns. Such theatres either close for the winter or run a repertory season.

**Sunday Opera Club, the.** Is run at the Glyndebourne Opera. Members subscribe for the cycle of Mozart, or classical operas given during the season. By law the Sunday audiences must consist only of members of the Glyndebourne Club and their guests. Particulars of this club can be obtained from the Glyndebourne Opera, 23 Baker Street, London, W.1.

**Sunday Societies.** Play-producing societies of professional artistes, who present plays at West End theatres, on Sunday evenings, as a *shop-window*. There are several well-known organizations (see entry at REPERTORY PLAYERS): *The Players' Guild*, *The Green Room Society*, the *Under Thirty Group*, and all have the common aim of placing before London managers, producers, and agents, 'talent scouts', casting directors, and other influential bodies, the worth of a new play and the individual merits of the players. In an over-crowded profession it is only in such societies that artistes' talent can reveal itself in the West End. Many members have engagements in London productions but, in a long run, individual actors are apt to become 'stale' in the monotony of one part, and Sunday Societies provide the opportunity of fresh work in a number of parts. Produced on the highest West End level, there are at least four weeks rehearsal for such plays.

**supers.** *Supernumeraries*. WALKING LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. Cf. CROWD.

**super master.** He who has charge of the supernumeraries in a big

production. He is also known as *the head of the supers*. On the analogy of chorus master.

**superstitions.** Are legion in the theatre, and, in defiance of logic, reason and example they are still regarded as sacred. I mention only the commonest and make no attempt to give their origins, which are lost in the mists of theatrical history. Real flowers are barred; only artificial ones being used for stage decoration. The reason for this is probably that the petals or leaves, falling from a vase, are apt to cause an artiste to slip on the stage as happened to a leading Shakespearean actor when real leaves were strewn about the stage in *As You Like It*. To leave soap behind when on tour is considered an ill-omen, also to whistle in a dressing-room, the belief being that the artiste nearest the door will be 'whistled out' (i.e. sacked). A make-up box should never be tidied, but left 'anyhow'. Powder, if dropped, should be danced upon (chorus girls' superstition) to bring luck. A hare's foot is considered lucky as a personal mascot; presented to an artiste, it ensures success. How this superstition arose is not certain, but Hindus regard the hare as sacred to the moon, because, they say, there is the silhouette of a hare in the full moon. Negroes frequently carry a hare's foot. To fall on the stage augurs a long engagement for the faller, and this was 'proved' to the compiler's knowledge, for, on the first night of Bram Stoker's vampire play, *Dracula*, a player tripped over the doorsill and fell heavily on the stage. The play ran for over two years in London, and had a New York run. Knitting on the stage by actresses is taboo; but to find a piece of cotton which will wind round a finger without breaking indicates a contract with a management bearing the initial suggested by the number of times the cotton went round the finger. Thus, three times would be letter C, which would suggest an engagement with a Noël Coward show or with the late Sir Charles B. Cochran. Certain tunes are considered unlucky, especially the Barcarolle from *The Tales of Hoffmann* and the nursery rhyme *Three Blind Mice*. Stage superstitions, however, need a chapter to themselves in a history of the theatre.

**supporting cast.** The artistes following the leads and seconds. Cf.

TAIL.

**surd.** A sound made without the vibration of the vocal chords. A sharp sound, e.g. *f*, *k*, *s*, *t*, *p*. From the Latin *surdus*, deaf. Hence *surdation*, the slipping of a sonant into a *surd* sound.

## surf

**surf.** An artiste, a musician, or a stage worker who combines night-work with a day job in another sphere of usefulness. Unless from *serf*, the origin of the term is a mystery.

**surnames.** Connote *fame* in the theatre. When *Walter* is dropped from *Plinge* then Plinge is said to have 'arrived' and will henceforth be a *name*.

**surprise-pink.** The blush-like colour of No. 36 gelatine, supplied by the Strand Electric & Engineering Company Ltd. When first used, this tint was a *surprise*. The 'medium' is now known as *lavender*.

**Surrey-side drama.** See MELODRAMA.

**suspense.** The breath-holding period of anticipation and uncertainty felt by the audience during a drama.

**Swaff.** The nickname of Mr Hannen Swaffer, the London journalist and dramatic critic (born November, 1879). An uncompromising writer, his provocative criticism did much to stimulate interest in the theatre, when his column was a regular feature, and gave rise to the pun *Honi Swaff qui mal y pense*.

**swag.** To loop up draperies, or curtains, which, thus treated, are technically *swagged*. As a noun, a *swag* is a looped-up curtain. The term comes from the Scandinavian *swag*, to sway; Norwegian *svagge*, and Icelandic *sveggja*, to cause to sway. Skeat quotes Palsgrave, 'I swagge, as a fatte persons belly swaggeth as he goth.' Shakespeare (*Othello*, Act II, scene iii) has 'swåg-bellied'.

**swallow.** The ability to assimilate a long part. To be a good study. 'Give the part to Robinson, he has a pretty good *swallow*.' One swallows and digests the part. A repertory term that has survived the days of stock companies.

**swallow and sigh.** Theatrical rhyming slang for 'collar and tie'. A tight-fitting collar occasionally causes one to do this. There is *nothing* more uncomfortable than an ill-fitting collar.

**Swan of Avon, the.** William Shakespeare, whose home was at Stratford-on-Avon, where is the Memorial Theatre. The sobriquet was coined by his friend Ben Jonson. Pythagoras held that, on their decease, poets turned into swans. Cf. NATURE'S DARLING.

**swan song.** An artiste's last performance or a writer's last play. A swán is said to sing when about to die.

**Swedish nightingale, the.** Jenny Lind (1820-1887), the Swedish singer whose first appearance in England was in Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable* in 1847. She lived in the United States from 1850

to 1852 and returned to England, where she remained until her death.

**swifter.** A steel line along which scenery, properties, electrical gear, etc., are carried *swiftly* into position when setting a scene during a very short interval.

**syl-slinger.** An actor with a tendency to 'elocute' or mouth his lines to the embarrassment of the audience. Short for *syllable-slinger*.

## T

**tab.** See TABS.

**tab-hook.** A spring hook that suspends running *tableau* curtains.

**tab show.** A musical show (usually a Concert Party) played in a setting of velvets or *tableau* curtains.

**table part.** One played from the waist upwards, the artiste being seated at a table or desk. The late Oscar Asche became so corpulent that he had to play the leading role in *Big Business* thus seated.

**tabs.** Short for *tableau* curtains. They part in the centre and open outwards. Cf. ACT DROP, BLIND, RAG, and ROLLER.

**tag line.** Usually shortened to *tag*. The last line in a play, to speak which at rehearsals is said to be unlucky. The theatre historian W. Macqueen Pope records that one of England's finest actors, Matheson Lang, always substituted 'the Colleen Bawn' which was the title of an old drama. Every stage beginner is warned against speaking the *tag* at rehearsals, or, indeed, at *any* time before the opening performance. (Scandinavian for 'point'.)

**tail, the.** The supporting cast, the players of the subsidiary parts. The names of the artistes at the bottom (tail) of a variety programme (cf. WINES AND SPIRITS). In the plural, any loose pieces of canvas, electrical cables, and the like that are hanging from the battens. Also rope ends from the flies. (Cf. SCRIM.) (2) The masking canvas that hangs from the fly-rail to prevent the audience in the front seats from peering into the working part of the stage. (3) In the plural, 'full fig' evening dress.

**take a call.** To receive the applause of the audience when the curtain is raised for that purpose at the end of an act, or the FINALE. These calls are taken according to the etiquette of the theatre, precedence usually being taken by the leading artistes in the first call; the second leads in the second call, and the ensemble at the final one. See POSITIONS FOR CURTAIN.

## **take a corner**

**take a corner.** To move towards the prompt or the O.P. corner during the action of a scene. 'When John comes on through the french-windows, you *take the O.P. corner* and let him have the stage.' (2) Take *the* corner, to take over the prompt book, or to 'run the corner' in the absence of the stage director.

**take the nap.** The art of receiving a blow on the open palm of the hand with the object of deceiving the audience into the belief that the blow was struck on the face, the sound being much the same. The technique was perfected by knock-about comedians in the music halls. A variant of 'take the rap', it is dialectal in origin and common to the West of England.

**take a prompt.** To receive the correct line from the prompter in such a way that the DRY-UP is not apparent from the front.

**takings.** The amount of money *taken* at the box-office, and at the doors, at any performance.

**talent scout.** An agent who travels round the country on the lookout (i.e. scouting) for potential stars. There are as many good artistes today as there ever were, but many remain in obscurity unless 'luck', or the talent scout, discovers their worth.

**tat.** A piece of tawdry scenery, or clothing. Hence the adjective *tatty*, applied to anything shoddy in the way of stage décor or a wardrobe. Probably the word derives from the Anglo-Saxon *taetteca*, a rag.

**T.B.O.** Total black out. A direction used in the fighting plot.

**tear a passion to tatters.** To rant, rave; give an embarrassingly flamboyant portrayal of an emotional or a tragic rôle. This method of 'ham' acting is seldom employed today and was largely a product of the melodramatic technique popular south of the Thames in the Victorian days. From Hamlet's advice to the players, 'O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow *tear a passion to tatters*, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings.'

**teaser.** See GRAND DRAPERY.

**technique.** The tricks of the actor's trade. Deportment, diction, modulation of the voice, the ability to move an audience at will. The mastery of his art.

**telegrams.** It seems to be a convention in the theatrical profession that letters should never be sent if telegrams can go instead. It is customary to send telegrams of good wishes to artiste friends on the first night of their productions. It is also considered unlucky

**that takes me off!**

to preserve such telegrams, which are religiously destroyed after the performance.

**telegraph.** To indicate to the audience an intention of putting over a line or a gag. A crude technique associated with melodrama and very cheap vaudeville acts.

**tenderloin, The.** The theatre district so-named in New York City. From the most succulent part of the loin of lamb. The reference may be to the *juicy* performances at some Broadway Theatres.

**tenor.** The highest natural voice in the male. The average compass is from *C* in the second space of the bass staff to the *A* an octave and a sixth above. Exceptional voices reach higher notes—sometimes the second octave of the low *C*, or even higher. (Jeffrey Pulver.)

**ten percenters.** Theatrical agents who charge ten per cent of the artiste's salary in return either for obtaining the engagement or for negotiating contracts.

**ten-shilling squat.** A seat in the stalls or dress circle which cost that price when this obsolete term was coined.

**terms.** The remuneration according to the *terms* of a theatrical contract. 'What are your *terms* for the part?' (Managers' and theatrical agents'.)

**terp.** A stage dancer. Short for *Terpsichorian*.

**Terpsichorines.** Stage dancers, particularly in a troupe. *Terpsichorè*, one of the nine muses of Greek Legend, represented the dawn and song. The Greek *terpein*, to delight, and *choros*, a dance in chorus. Cf.:

**Thaliá.** The Muse of Comedy. from Greek *thaleia*, blooming.

**thank you both!** Like 'God bless you. both!', this is a traditional stage aside when the applause is weak. Cf. IT MUST BE THE LANDLADY!

**thanks for having me.** A catch-phrase uttered by a boarder departing from his rooms after an unsatisfactory week. The emphasis is on the participle. The bill was too large.

**that's out!** Said of any gag or piece of business that falls flat when tried out during a rehearsal, or one that, introduced in a performance, had no response. Cf. KEEP THAT IN . . . AND AT THE MATINÉE.

**that takes me off!** A catch-phrase expressive of defeat (as in argument) or incredulity. '*That took me off* (the stage), I couldn't argue any longer.' A reference to an exit line.

## **theatre**

**theatre.** The name derives from the Greek *theatron*, an arena for seeing shows. From the verb *theamai*, I view, gaze at, behold.

**theatre-goers.** The generic term for patrons of the theatrical art, from the legitimate drama to vaudeville. Cf. VAUDEVILLE-GOER.

**theatre, good/bad** (of a play, or acting). Containing the elements of art, drama, and entertainment. A play is good, or bad, according to the judgement of a competent critic and the reaction of an intelligent audience. 'I liked that scene between Sylvia and Michael in Act II, it was such brilliant theatre.' 'That scene ought to be re-written, it is bad theatre.'

**theatre Knight.** An actor who has achieved a Knighthood in recognition of his service to the theatre.

**Theatreland.** The theatre district in London, New York, or any other big city. Cf. PLAYDOM.

**Theatre Royal Out.** The jocular reply to the question 'Where are you playing next week?' It means that the week is vacant, and the company will be *out* of work. See NO PLAY; NO PAY.

**theatre ship.** Any converted merchantman that functions as a theatre. A notable example was the old *Gourka*, the Royal Fleet Theatre ship anchored at Scapa Flow in the 1914-18 war. These ships are fitted like any theatre ashore and can seat quite a large audience.

**theatrical.** The adjective applied to anyone possessed of the worst traits of the lesser Pro, loud in dress and manner, affected, showy and meretricious. A type that is gradually dying out.

**theatrical card.** An artiste's card giving his address, telephone number, and line of business. It is handed to an agent's receptionist when the artiste is seeking work, or to the management of a theatre when applying for complimentary tickets.

**theatrical maid.** An actress's dresser. (American theatre.)

**theatrical stores.** Warehouses in which managements keep scenery and properties when a production ends its run in London or returns from a tour.

**theatricals.** Professional actors and actresses. 'Mrs Harris has some *theatricals* boarding with her this week.' (2) Short for *amateur theatricals*, a variant of private theatricals.

**theme song.** In musical comedy, the recurring melody that is associated with the two leading characters. Cf. *leitmotiv*.

**Thespian.** Generic for 'theatrical'. Thespis was a semi-legendary figure, a strolling player-*cum*-poet, who lived in the latter half of

the sixth century, B.C. He is credited with being the first to introduce a player to whom the chorus leader responded, thus starting dialogue in the theatre. Dr Pickard-Cambridge has suggested that the origin of *Thespis* is in Homer's *Odyssey*, Bk. 1, 328-29, where *thespin aoidēn* means 'inspired songstress'.

**Thespian rage.** Simulated anger. After *Thespis*, the supposed founder of the Greek drama. Lower-cased *thespian* is an adjective for any theatrical behaviour, especially in an actor.

**thud and blunder.** A humorous inversion of *blood and thunder*, the crude, noisy technique of melodrama acting.

**they sat on their hands.** Said of a dull audience which has refused to applaud.

**thinker.** One who 'plays' a *walking part*. A stage super who has no lines to speak but makes up for this by adopting a pose similar to Rodin's celebrated work *The Thinker*.

**thinking part.** A walk-on part. The artiste stands, or sits, on the stage and looks wise.

**this is an orchestra, not an elastic band!** The classic observation by an exasperated musical director after trying in vain to keep pace with the woman vocalist who was hopelessly out of tune and time.

**thriller.** The stage version of a thriller novel. A detective play containing at least one murder, e.g. *The Cat and the Canary*, *The Murder on the Second Floor*. Cf. WHODUNIT.

**throw.** The effective area of light provided by a spotlight lantern. Cf. SPILL.

**throw a cleat.** To join one flat to another by throwing a sash-line over the cleat and making fast to the tie-off screw.

**throw a line.** The same as the preceding. The sash-line, which is about eighteen feet long, attached to the top of one flat, is, with an outward flick of the wrist, thrown over a wooden cleat of the same height on the other flat, then laced behind the screws in the stiles of both flats alternately, the line being then made fast with two half-hitches at the base of its own flat.

**throw a temperament.** To make a scene at rehearsal, or after an act in a play. Such conduct on the part of (usually) mediocre players is ascribed to the 'artistic temperament', and far more indulgence is shown than there would be in a less 'free and easy' profession. Competent artistes seldom throw temperaments.

**throw away.** To under stress lines in order to lend emphasis to

## **thunder drum**

one that needs pointing later in a speech. (2) Noun: *throw-away*.

A brochure of a play. A handbill.

**thunder drum.** A slackened bass drum, beaten with a padded stick, can be used as a substitute for a THUNDER SHEET.

**thunder roller.** An obsolete method of creating a storm effect. Iron balls were rolled down troughs and a rumble of thunder was produced, but the effect was not as convincing as that obtained by the modern method.

**thunder sheet.** A piece of sheet metal, about six feet by two feet, suspended by a line from the stage grid. It is hung at a convenient height for the effects man to shake the handle at the foot of the sheet and create a most realistic thunder effect. It is very necessary that the sheet be hung well clear of the stage wall and the scenery.

**thunder tank.** A galvanized iron tank suspended by line in the same way as the thunder sheet. When struck with a padded drumstick, the thunder tank yields the same effect as the thunder sheet, but the sheet makes a more realistic 'crack' and reverberation. But thunder effects can now be recorded on the panatrope.

**Thursday off for study.** It is the custom in some weekly repertory companies to have a rehearsal-free day on Thursday; this allows them to study their lines thoroughly in time for the week-end dress rehearsal for the following week's play.

**tie off.** To make a line fast when a flat has been cleated to another, or when a batten has been 'deaded' and tied off on the fly-rail.

**tie-off screw.** A screw on the stile of a flat to which a line is made fast.

**ties.** Pieces of cloth, or canvas strips, used for tying rolled cloths on to the battens, or otherwise to secure cloths for travelling on lorries, or for storage.

**tiers.** An obsolete name for the grand, or dress circle, particularly in theatres where they have more than one circle. Cf. DIAMOND HORSESHOE.

**tights.** Tight-fitting costumes worn by ballet dancers, or by actors in some period plays.

**timbre.** The distinctive quality of a voice, apart from intensity or pitch. French *timbre*, a small bell.

**time book.** The book in the stage director's corner in which he times the length of the acts at each performance. Cf.:

**time the acts.** The assistant stage manager notes in the time book the exact minute the curtain rises on an act, and the time the

curtain descends. At the final curtain the exact running time is calculated exclusive of the intervals, which are timed separately.

**timing.** The pace, pausing, and tricks in elocution used by experienced artistes. Timing is extremely important, and especially so in farcical comedy.

**tin beard.** A crêpe hair beard that has not had its edges painted in. Such a beard has a hard line which gives the impression that it is likely to fall off at any moment.

**tin pan alley.** 'Any district where song publishers congregate, the "grave of the song-writer's hopes"' (Eric Partridge in *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*).

**Tod.** Mr *Tod* Slaughter, an actor-manager who, in recent years, has specialized in the portrayal of traditional melodrama villains. He performs these parts with considerable gusto and, one feels, suppressed humour. There has been a popular demand for the revival of such blood-curdling dramas as *Sweeney Tod, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street*; *Maria Martin, or The Murder in the Red Barn*; and other MELODRAMATIC classics. Mr Slaughter played a round of these parts, with great *élan* and success, at the famous old Bedford Theatre, in Camden Town, London,

**toe-dance.** To dance on the POINTS, as in ballet.

**toe-smiths.** Stage dancers. On the analogy of *blacksmith, silver-smith*, etc.

**toe-terpery.** Tap-dancing. A jocular-ery formation from *toe* dance and *Terpsichore*.

**toga play.** A Classical dra. a in which the male characters wear togas.

**toggle.** A cross bar on a flat. The term came to the theatre from nautical speech, possibly via an ex seaman stage-hand.

**tone.** The TIMBRE and DELIVERY of a player. Cf. PITCH.

**tonsil test.** An audition for a stage or screen part. A voice test.

**Tony Lumpkin part.** A yokel, or any country character in comedy that has a rustic flavour. From the character in Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*.

**top lighting.** The light battens, spot- and floodlighting, acting area lanterns, etc., in the upper region of the light plot.

**top liner.** A leading vaudeville artiste whose name is on the *top line* of the programme or the playbills. He has reached the *top of the bill*.

**top of the bill.** See TOP LINER.

**torch warbler.** A female singer in a vaudeville turn. A *torch singer*

## **tormentors**

who, during a particularly sentimental part of her song, shines her torch in the face of a male in the audience and thereby affords much amusement to the house and acute embarrassment to the object of her attention.

**tormentors.** The two permanent flaps just inside the proscenium arch which meet the corners of the setting and thus prevent the audience from seeing behind the set. They *torment* the inquisitive.

**torso tosser.** A lightly-clad stage dancer.

**touch the part, he (or she) can't.** It is beyond the competence of the person who has been cast for it. 'It was a wonderful part, but she couldn't *touch it*.'

**toucher.** One of the HALF-CROWN BRIGADE.

**toupée.** A wig, or false hair, covering a semi-bald head. The French *toupet*, the top knot of a periwig.

**tour en l'air.** A turn of the body made in the air by a ballet dancer.

**tour list.** The list of dates (the towns and names of the theatres at which the company will play), given to artistes contracting for engagement.

**touring cast.** The cast of a touring version of a London show.

**touring production.** A replica of a metropolitan success and TYPE-CAST as near as possible. The voices, intonation, business, and mannerisms must be faithfully copied 'Chinese fashion' so that the production is a true version to present to provincial audiences.

**touring rights.** The rights to tour a version of a London show.

(2) (Jocular.) If anyone makes a good joke, or tells an original story, the hearer might say: 'I like that, it's good. May I have the *touring rights*?' Cf. BAND PARTS.

**touring staff.** The front-of-the-house or back stage staff carried by a touring company. Cf. RESIDENT STAFF.

**touring show.** A play, musical comedy, revue, or vaudeville act, that tours the provincial dates. Less formal than TOURING PRODUCTION.

**track.** The rail for runner curtains or for 'tabs'.

**tracker.** A thin steel cable run over blocks for the operation of some device connected with lighting or with remote control of a spectacular effect.

**tragédie lyrique.** A tragedy set to music, but with no spoken dialogue. French for GRAND OPERA.

**tragédienne.** A tragic actress. (French.)

**tragedy.** Is primarily a conflict, or collision leading to catastrophe.

Aristotle noted that the catastrophe commonly follows guilt or error, leading to the view, developed by later writers, that the tragic motive is a working out of poetic justice. The word derives from the Greek *tragōidē* which is compounded of *tragos*, a goat, and *oidē*, a song. In the early Greek tragedies the players were dressed as goats, satyrs, or fauns (half-men, half-goats).

**tragedy queen.** A leading actress in tragic drama. A 'weeper and wailer' in the grand tradition.

**tragi-comedy.** A play containing both elements, the balance being such as to produce no catastrophic ending.

**trailer curtain.** See FRENCH CURTAIN.

**trampolin.** A table framework, the top of which is made of intersecting elastic, or spring, webbing upon which a person may fall from a height without injury. Sometimes it is used to assist a ballet-dancer's leap from off-stage. A slurring of *trampolin*, a variant of *trampoline*, the word comes from the Italian *trampoli*, a pair of stilts, hence a *trampolin-act*, a turn on stilts. *Trampoline* is also a kind of spring mattress.

**transparency.** A cloth painted on lines of scrim so that it becomes transparent when lit from behind. Cf. GAUZE CLOTH.

**traveller.** A PROFILE WING with a cloth attached and hung from a track so that it can be drawn on to the stage. This piece is also known as a *trailer*.

**travel on one's props.** To leave luggage with the railway company as security against the travelling facilities granted, money being lacking for the fares and sight of the company.

**travesty.** A burlesque of a serious work.

**treasury.** The conventional term for payment in the theatre. Hence:

**treasury call.** The time at which salaries are paid on Friday. In some theatres there is no formal payment, the manager taking the envelopes to the dressing-rooms. When there is a stated time for the payment of artistes, the notice (call) goes on the call board on the eve of payment; at the time stated the artistes go to the manager's office to collect their packets. Cf. GHOST.

**trick-line.** A length of cordage with a block (pulley), used for swinging or lifting gear, scenery, etc. A kind of 'handy billy'.  
(2) Very strong twine used to pull things off the stage in sight of the audience, or to pull down hinged parts of a flat in a quick change of scenery.

## **trigger**

**trigger.** A wooden block that, with a projecting handle fixed under the stage floor, secures and releases the runners.

**trip.** See **CLEW**.

**tripe.** Electric cables hanging from overhead equipment. Cf. **TAILS**.

**trough.** The old-fashioned type of footlight container. It was superseded some years ago by the almost universal magazine compartments.

**troupe.** A theatrical company of any sort, a concert party revue, dancing *troupe*, touring pantomime, etc.

**trouper.** A member of the above. The term is used in a laudatory sense. 'He, or she, is a jolly good *trouper*.' A loyal, reliable, 'never-let-the-side down' colleague.

**trunk hose.** Breeches worn over the tights by Shakespearean actors. They reach from the waist to the middle of the thigh, and were fashionable during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Cf:

**trunks.** The theatrical shortening of the preceding.

**trunnion.** The U-shaped bracket supporting the housing of a spot-, or floodlight lantern, by which the lamp can be tilted, and secured at any angle. Also known as the *fork*.

**try back.** A rehearsal direction for the repetition of a scene, or part of a scene, to ensure that the artiste has fully understood a change that has been made in the dialogue or business.

**try it on the dog.** To give a new production several weeks run in the provinces. This enables the company to settle into their parts and to make any improvements, or adjustments, before the metropolitan opening. Cf. **OPEN COLD**.

**try-out theatre.** One used for the presentation of new plays before London production.

**try-out tour.** A short tour of the provincial theatres which allows the cast to get used to the reactions of several kinds of audience before they open in London.

**tumble** (verb). In a theatre that is not high enough to take a flown cloth out of sight of the audience, it can be 'taken away' on lines, one on top, another at the bottom, and with a *tumbler*-batten placed in the fold of the cloth to prevent creasing. Thus is the cloth *tumbled*. (2) To fall on the stage, hence:

**tumbler.** An acrobat.

**tumbler-batten.** A round batten used for rolling cloths when they are placed in a scene store. It is also used to ballast an empty **SET OF LINES**, in place of sandbags.

**turkey show.** One played to country bumpkins. In reference to *turkeys* (rustics). (Obsolete.)

**turn.** A music-hall act.

**turn away money, to.** To display *house full* boards outside a theatre. Every seat being sold and no more money can be taken. The disappointed people—and their money—are turned away.

**turn out.** An old term for an interval. The patrons *turned out* of the theatre for a breath of air, or a drink 'at the pub opposite': 'There wasn't much of a *turn out* at the Royal after the first act. It seems to be a poor house.'

**tushery.** Archaic expressions and exclamations used in romantic 'costume' plays. 'pish!' 'tush!' etc. The word *tushery* is said to have been coined by R. L. Stevenson.

**tutu.** A skirt of tarlatan worn by dancers in classical ballet. Lincoln Kirstein says that there are two styles of this ballet skirt. The long 'romantic', bell-shaped skirt which originated, *circa* 1832, with Taglioni, and a short 'classic' skirt originating, *in* 1887, with Zucchi, who cut short the length of the tarlatan in the old-style skirt to create the new. Lincoln Kirstein, General Director of the New York City Ballet, says that *tutu*, a term adopted from the French, usually refers to the later style. Cf. FROU FROU.

**tuxedo.** A dinner jacket. Named after the Club at Tuxedo Park, New York, where it was first introduced.

**twenty pound actor.** A baby born into the theatrical profession. Cf. BORN IN A PROPERTY BASKET.

**twice-nightly cuts.** Those judicious deletions made in the text to reduce the running time of a play that has to be performed twice in one evening. e.g. a touring company that has to do two performances on Saturday evening. Time is usually saved by reducing the intervals and quickening the scene changes. But, even so, cuts in the script are inevitable and it is a job requiring tact and delicacy. The once-nightly version usually runs from  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to  $2\frac{3}{4}$  hours, whereas the short version has to be performed in two hours. The cutting of the script has to be done with skill and delicacy as leading players are apt to be touchy over what they consider their best lines. In fact, every line is a best one when it is in danger of being cut out of the part. Usually, however, time is saved by increasing the tempo of the play, and shortening the act waits.

**twofers.** Tickets admitting *two* people for the price of one. When a

## **two lines and a spit**

play was in danger of *flopping* this 'twofer' expedient was adopted in some of the London theatres as a means of reviving interest. Those seeing the play talked about it and, tempted by the scheme of payment, other people began to fill the houses, and the management thus recouped their loss.

**two lines and a spit.** A very small part. A relic of the days of melodrama. See BIT PART and cf. THINKING PART.

**two/three/four-handed scene.** Describes a scene in a show where two, three or four artistes take part.

**type.** Short for TYPE-CAST.

**type cast.** To assign parts to artistes who approximate the type drawn in the play. (2) (Of touring managements.) To engage a cast that must resemble that in the London production.

# U

**Uglies.** The ugly sisters in *Cinderella*, the Christmas pantomime, are always referred to as *the Uglies*. 'Who are playing the *Uglies* this year?'

**ultra-violet.** Lighting using the maximum output of any source emitting ultra-violet rays. The output from the source is 'filtered' of the greatest possible percentage of visible light, and the residual rays are used for luminous or trick effects. Cf. BLACK LIGHT.

**ululation.** The *howl* of disapproval from the cheaper seats when a play disappointed that section of a Victorian audience. A journalistic term now obsolete, modern audiences being far better behaved. But the term was common in newspaper reports of first nights.

**under dress.** In order to facilitate a quick change, it is advisable to don as much of one's 'following clothing' as can be worn with comfort. Thus a bathing suit under pyjamas, and both under a lounge suit, or evening dress. One has then to take off instead of put on garments, and much time is saved.

**under part.** To give to an artiste a part that is unworthy of his reputation and talent. 'It was a very good production, but Robinson was disgracefully *under-parted*. He should have had the lead.'

**under rehearse.** Producers of weekly repertory have necessarily to give inadequate attention to plays and players. There is no excuse for this if a production is several weeks in rehearsal,

nevertheless one has to sit through performances of plays that are all too frequently *under rehearsed*. Cf. OVER REHEARSE.

**understudy.** One who studies a rôle and rehearses it during the run of a play, in case the original artiste falls ill or is otherwise prevented from appearing.

**understudy call.** See UNDERSTUDY REHEARSAL.

**understudy's chance.** The time when he, or she, plays the part understudied. A *chance* to make a success (especially in London) and attract the attention of managements, agents, and the critics. Cf. FAME IN A NIGHT.

**understudy rehearsal.** The call for all, or individual, understudies, who then perform the play in its entirety, or in part, under the direction of the stage director. Such rehearsals *should* take place weekly if the understudies are to be efficient, and able to 'go on' at short notice. Cf. UNDERSTUDY CALL.

**Under Thirty Group.** A London Sunday Society of young artistes founded in the 1940's by two ex-students of R.A.D.A., Oscar Quittak and Karris Mond, who felt that too many young players of talent were being forced out of the profession through non-recognition. To qualify for membership, a player must be under thirty years of age and have had six months' experience on the professional stage.

**undressary.** An under-dressed revue, a LEG SHOW.

**unity.** In drama, it means unity in time, place, and action on the lines of the traditions of classical drama.

**unsympathetic part.** One likely to make the artiste unpopular with an audience. It puts them out of sympathy with the player. 'I've been given a wretched part next week, the audience will hate me.' (Young actress's lament in repertory.)

**up in the Park.** Playing in Shakespeare in Regent's Park Open Air Theatre, London. 'What are you doing these days?' 'I'm *up in the Park* this summer.'

**up in a part.** Having thoroughly learnt it, and being DEAD LETTER PERFECT. Cf. WELL FIRMED.

**upper circle.** The tier of seats immediately above the dress circle.

**uproar.** Grand Opera. The pun being suggested by the noise in, say, Wagner's works.

**up-stage.** As a stage direction this means that the player walks away from the footlights towards the back of the setting. One moves *up*, because most early theatres had raked stages. (2) Used

## **up-stage and county**

somatically; thus, up-stage hand, down-stage foot, etc. When standing sideways, facing centre stage, an artiste's up-stage arm or foot is the one farther from the audience. (3) A slang term for anyone prone to conceit. 'So and So has become rather *up-stage* lately.'

**up-stage and county.** To be 'high and mighty'. Accustomed to being *up-stage* of one's fellow artistes, and be aloof (off-stage). A manner, supposed to be that of the best *county* people, connotes extreme gentility.

**upstairs.** The seating accommodation above the ground floor. The boxes, dress and upper circles, balcony, and gallery. Cf. THE FLOOR.

**use of play titles.** By theatrical landladies. A common practice. Thus: 'I have *Hay Fever* in the house this week.' This struck the caller as a poor excuse for not taking him in, until he realized that *Hay Fever* was the title of the Noël Coward play at the opposition theatre.

**use the stage.** The advice to an artiste by a producer when he wants him to make more of a scene he is playing, without giving him precise moves, to stand in the centre of the stage. 'You are effacing yourself at the back, take more of the stage.'

**usher.** One who shows patrons to their seats and hands them programmes. From the Middle English *uschere*; Old French *ussier*; ultimately, Latin *ostiarius*, the accusative of *ostiarius*, a door-keeper.

**usherette.** A female USHER.

**util.** Short for *utility* (actor).

**utility, or general utility.** Is a person whose sphere of usefulness embraces scene-shifting, scene-painting, or rather the touching-up of scenery, and the portrayal of very small parts that are unimportant.

**U.V.** Short for ULTRA VIOLET.

## V

**V.A.F.** The Variety Artistes Federation, London.

**valarice.** A pleated border.

**vamp.** To improvise; make shift. To make anything that resembles the genuine article; e.g., to cover padded ginger-beer boxes with tapestry or chintz to give the appearance of a divan or settee.

The word derives from Middle English *vampay* (*vaumpe*), from Old French *avanpie*, the front part of a shoe. Hence to *vamp* was to re-patch or repair shoes. The general acceptance today is 'to improvise'. For instance, one *vamps* tunes on a piano. (2) Short for *vampire* a female 'siren' who battens on men, a gold-digger. Hence a *vamp-part*. (3) A *vampire* trap. Cf. SNOW BROWN.

**vamps.** Doors cut in a flat and filled with rubber springs for an actor to go through. Its main use is in pantomime.

**variety.** Music-hall entertainment comprising songs, 'comic turns', sketches, impersonations, acrobatics, juggling displays, 'stunts' (e.g., the famous 'sawing through a woman' act), one-act skits on current events. In fact, any piece of original entertainment worth putting on. In recent years variety theatres have extended their scope to include revue and musical comedy. Cf. VAUDEVILLE.

**variety, the father of.** The late William Morton, who, *circa* 1848, founded the first London music hall, The Canterbury, in Westminster Bridge Road, He later managed the London Palace of Varieties.

**variety public.** Music-hall addicts, as opposed to play-goers.

**variety stage.** The music-hall side of the theatre world. Contrast LEGITIMATE STAGE.

**vaudeville.** Synonymous with VARIETY. It originates in (*chansons de*) *Vau de Vire*, songs of the Normandy valley where Olivier Basselin, the fifth century ballad writer lived. They were light, satirical pieces in a style similar to the numbers in present-day Revue, though perhaps less sophisticated.

**vaudeville black-out.** A music-hall sketch played on quick lines and ending in a black-out. Cf. BLACK-OUT CURTAIN.

**vaudeville-goers.** Patrons of the variety theatre.

**vaudeville house.** A variety theatre; a music hall; a BURLESQUE HOUSE.

**vaudeville, in.** Appearing on the variety stage.

**vaudevillain.** One who, in a vaudeville sketch, burlesques a melodrama villain. A jocular pun of the music halls.

**velarian.** An unbattened ceiling-cloth used as a canopy, or other effect. Literally, an awning.

**velvets.** Velvet curtains or borders, used for sketch settings in Revue.

**vennette.** To cut an irregular circle out of a piece of gelatine (medium) which, when slotted into a spotlight frame, will throw

## vent

a whitish patch of light in the centre of the colour projected, the irregular circle preventing a hard line appearing round the centre of the spot. From *venet*, an obsolete, rare form of *vignette* (ultimately from the Latin *venetus*). As in the photographic sense of *vignette*, to *venet* is to shade off and soften the edges, leaving only the central position. The colour of *venet* is a bluish-grey; 'water colours', as it was anciently known.

**vent.** Short for *ventriloquist*.

**ventilator.** A poor play, or any show, that empties the theatre. One doing such bad business that there is no danger of the auditorium becoming overheated.

**ventriloquist's guy.** His 'feed', or doll.

**Vera Lynn.** A drink of gin. Rhyming slang of the music halls. See FORCES' SWEETHEART.

**vertical line of sight.** That from the gallery on to the stage. From this coign the spectator should be able to see the whole of the setting and every movement made by the cast. The stage director, however, must be very careful to check the border when there are steps, or a rostrum, at the back of the setting, because, if the border is 'deaded' too low, the gallery patrons will not be able to see above the artistes' shoulder's. See the entry at MASK.

**vet.** To patch up a bad play; usually, however, to doctor the BOOK. To make it more palatable to the taste of a provincial or an otherwise 'awkward' audience. Often metropolitan successes with risqué lines, or suggestive business, have to be toned down for the provinces, where some of the local Watch Committees are somewhat narrow minded. Not that many provincial audiences are pleased with the Watch Committee's interference on their behalf, and, in these enlightened times, there is far less arbitrariness in the matter of local censorship than there was during Queen Victoria's reign.

**Victoria the Great.** The title given to Anna Neagle, the British stage and film star, who gave a magnificent and memorable portrayal of Queen Victoria in the film *Victoria the Great*.

**Vic-Wells ballet.** The Old Vic and Sadler's Wells Ballet Company.

**village blacksmith.** An actor who seldom keeps an engagement longer than a few weeks. Euphemistic for a failure. From Longfellow's famous lines: 'Week in, week out, from noon till night, you can hear his bellows roar.' (Cited by J. Redding Ware in *Passing English*.)

**villain of the piece.** The 'dirty dog' of melodrama. The would-be seducer and rogue who is invariably frustrated in his nefarious plans by JUVENILE JOHN, the hero. Probably the effectual prototype of all stage villains was Iago.

**v.i.r.** Short for vulcanized india rubber. Cable of one or more strands of wire, with *v.i.r.* insulation protected by a braid, usually of red or black. This type of cable is run in metal conduit and is chiefly used for permanent wiring. A number of them, in fire-proofed canvas hose, can be substituted for MULTICORE.

**vis comica.** Strong comedy. Latin *vis*, force, and *comica*.

**vision.** A portion of gauze-covered cloth which, when illuminated from behind, renders a figure visible to the audience and thus creates the effect of a *vision*. Used for ghost scenes and transformation scenes.

**vision cloth.** That used for vision effects. See the preceding entry and cf. TRANSPARENCY.

**visiting company.** A touring company which *visits* a theatre during an itinerary.

**visitors' book.** Is kept by a theatrical landlady and, as the guests leave, they are requested to 'write something in the book'. It is a pleasure to pay a compliment to a landlady who has done her best to make one's stay comfortable or whose cooking has justified the *cordon bleu*. Sometimes, however, the book is left unsigned or 'Quoth the raven' written across the page, in reference to Edgar A. Poe's lines 'Quoth the raven, never more!'

**voice, in good/bad** (of oper. & singers). Singing well, or ill. 'I heard So and So in *Manon* and thought her excellent, but I was told afterwards that she wasn't in very *good voice* that night.'

**voice, the.** That of the late Henry Ainley who had the finest speaking voice on the English stage during the early twentieth century. Illness cut short his stage career at its peak.

**vomedy.** A merging of *vaudeville comedy*. An American coinage which, because of its very aptness, has been adopted by the English theatre.

## W

**waffle.** To dither, fluff lines, or generally prove awkward in a scene.

**Wagnerite.** An ardent admirer of Richard Wagner's operas. From George Bernard Shaw's book *The Perfect Wagnerite*, published in 1898.

## wagon stage

**wagon stage.** See PLATFORM STAGE, ROLLING STAGE.

**wait.** The interval between the acts of a play or musical comedy, variety or concert entertainment. Cf. STAGE WAIT.

**waiter's dress front.** Is sometimes worn by an actor who has a very quick change into evening dress and has no time to change his shirt. A paper front is placed over the day shirt, and collar and tie fixed; thus are the minutes saved in the change, and, with evening clothes donned, there is no visible difference from the genuine article.

**walk a scene.** To carry out the movements and speak the lines mechanically. At rehearsals *walking a scene* enables the director to check the effectiveness of his direction. Cf. ACT IT and MECHANICS.

**walk hands.** When a flat is lifted from the stage it is *footed*, and the stage-hand who lifts the top of the flat, uses his hands in the manner of feet walking, which enables him to bring the flat to an upright position. Cf. FOOT A FLAT.

**walk it.** To walk a scene as distinct from *acting* it. 'Walk the scene please, I want to get the picture.'

**walk on.** To have a lineless part. The artist merely helps to *dress* the stage picture. Cf. WALKING GENTLEMAN; WALKING LADY; THINKING PART and SUPER.

**walk the stage.** To move with ease and grace upon the boards of the stage. This art is difficult to acquire: some, indeed, never acquire it. Carriage, balance, gesture, and the correct method of turning come within the meaning of 'walking the stage'. One should walk on the ball of the foot, for this ensures perfect balance when turning up, or down, stage. The arms should be held loosely and naturally by the sides; neither tensed nor swinging. Gestures should be few and when made they should be quite bold. Costume comedy gave excellent training in the art of walking the stage, and Shakespearean repertory even better.

**walk the ties.** To walk along the railroad tracks from one date to another through not being able to pay the railway fare. 'If this rotten business persists we'll have to *walk the ties* this week-end.' A jocular reference to the American term *ties*, or the sleepers on the track.

**walk through.** To walk through a scene at rehearsals for *movements*, little attention being paid to words. Cf. WALK IT.

**walking gentleman.** A male supernumerary. One of a stage crowd. (Euphemistic.)

## **warning, and go**

**walking lady.** A female supernumerary. She walks elegantly on the stage showing off her dress.

**wall as background.** Where no cyclorama is fitted, the permanently whitened back wall is used for lighting effects.

**wall, the.** The side, or back wall of the stage.

**Walter Plinge.** The programme name, corresponding to *A. N. Other* on the football field. It hides the identity of the player who substitutes, or doubles, for another. There are several versions of the origin of this name, but the one most in favour is that Plinge was the proprietor of a public-house near Drury Lane Theatre, London, and was once called in to play a small part when no actor was available. Some say that the part was created for him. Sir St Vincent Troubridge has communicated the following: "There is no doubt that Walter Plinge is of Bensonian coinage. The version I have heard most often, and seen in print, is that Plinge was the name of the landlord of the public-house opposite the stage-door of the Lyceum (not Drury Lane) who was in high favour with the company through allowing its young impecunious actors to run up modest scores for drink "on the slate". His immortalization was in the nature of a joke between Henry Jalland, the acting manager (and, as such, responsible for the programme matter) and the men of the company, for some ambitious youngster protested at his subordinate capacity being emphasized by his doubling being indicated on the programme. Jalland laughingly substituted *Walter Plinge*."

**wardrobe.** Clothing worn by the cast. Cf. STAGE CLOTHES and STREET CLOTHES. (2) The domain of the wardrobe mistress and her assistants. Where they make and repair dresses, costumes, etc., worn in the production.

**wardrobe mistress.** The woman in charge of the theatre wardrobe. She is responsible for the upkeep, and good repair.

**warm** (of an audience). Generous-hearted, quick to appreciate good lines and to applaud at the right time.

**warm up a spot.** To narrow the beam of a spotlight which intensifies (*warms*) the light.

**warn.** A direction in the prompt copy of the script, applies to all *calls*, light, or effects cues, etc. See WARNING, AND GO.

**warning, and go.** The signal system from the prompt corner to the flies, electricians' perches, or to any part of the stage where effects are to be carried out. The *warning* is a red light, and the

## **war paint**

*go* is green. In some theatres these colours are reversed, or one light is used as a warning, and the *go* is when the light is switched off. The warning tells the hand who works the effect to *stand by*. In spectacular productions where there are many effects there is a large cue board with lights wired in series, but it is always safe to work on the two light system. Bells are also used, but they are better for remote-control effects, for they are too noisy for near-stage warnings. See CUE BOARD.

**war paint.** Stage MAKE-UP.

**water black.** Mascara, a cosmetic for eyelashes. Water must be applied to the substance before the black can be produced; hence the term. It is vulgarly known in the dressing-rooms as SPIT BLACK.

**wax.** To make a gramophone record of scenes in a play; e.g., an act in opera. 'We are *waxing* Act II tomorrow night.'

**way board.** A board with plugs for feeding electrical equipment. It can feed several units from one source. Cf. SHOE.

**ways.** Number of circuits on a switchboard, MULTICORE cables, etc.

**weapons.** Make-up. Under this heading come sticks of grease-paint, liners, orange-sticks, powder boxes, and all the appurtenances of the art.

**we don't like that sort of thing 'ere!** An expression of censure from a stage-hand in a provincial theatre. It is applied to a play with risqué lines or near-the-bone acting. The local staff know to a hair what type of play will 'go' in their town.

**week out.** A week during a tour when no theatre has been found to take the show and a week out of work results. 'We do six weeks, then have a *week out*, then a clear run until Christmas.'

**weekly Rep.** A one play per week repertory company.

**weepee.** A sentimental play; a sob drama; a tear-jerker. (2) An emotional part.

**weights.** Are of several sizes and are used to reinforce braces. They are also placed on floodlight stands to ensure stability.

**well firmed.** Having a *firm* knowledge of one's part, perfect in the words and the business: 'Don't worry about Smythe, he is always *well firmed* in a part.' It was an old Stock actor's phrase and is seldom heard today.

**well put on.** A lavishly produced musical, or a 'straight' play that has good décor and a well-dressed cast. Well presented in scenery and lighting.

**when the gaffs burst**

**we'll write to you!** The stock promise to an unpromising applicant for an audition. It has become a theatrical catch-phrase, and is often directed at anyone singing out of tune in the dressing-room. A variant of *We'll let you know*. Cf. the American phrase: 'Don't call us; we'll call you.'

**West End technique.** Polished acting in the manner of London's West End stage. 'Play it *West End* this week, they are pretty conservative in this town.'

**we never closed!** The proud slogan of the Windmill Theatre, London, which kept open through the fiercest of blitzes on the capital and during the flying-bomb attacks. A film was made of the company and presented under that title.

**Western, a.** A horse opera, or 'cowboy' drama.

**wet white.** Liquid cream for whitening the hands. It is applied wet and very soon dries.

**we were together in . . .** The pathetic boast of the old, unsuccessful actor in reference to a star whose name has cropped up in dressing-room conversation. The speaker was in the same company as the star during his apprenticeship on tour.

**we've done a deal!** A phrase meaning that the libraries have thought the show good enough to block-book a number of seats for a certain length of time. The bookings are at a cut rate and guaranteed.

**what a comic.** A derogatory phrase directed at a comedian who tries to be funny without success.

**what do you know?** The stock question asked of a friend on POVERTY CORNER, London. It is ironical, for seldom is anything known about new productions.

**what's the B.O.?** What is the box-office charge for seats? (American.) Also: How are the bookings for the evening performance? (Managers'.)

**wheel.** A circuit of theatres owned by a syndicate. Cf. CIRCLE, and RING.

**when I was with Irving.** The sarcastic rejoinder to a boastful actor who is always referring to the stars with whom he has shared dressing-rooms during his lengthy stage career. In the old days the ACTOR LADDIES used to boast that they were in the same cast as Sir Henry Irving at the Lyceum. The stock comment was: 'Walking on, I suppose.'

**when the gaffs burst.** The time the people come out of the

## wheeze

theatres (gaffs) at the end of a performance. A London taxi-drivers' phrase. Cf. GAFF STREET.

**wheeze.** An old term for a music-hall gag. It originated in the travelling circus and was applied to the clown's patter, which used to be given in a *wheezy* enunciation. The term is general slang for a trick, a plan. 'That's a good *wheeze*, let's try it.'

**whiskey seats.** The end seats in the stalls, or dress circle, from which it is easy to slip into the adjacent bar for a whiskey and soda, or gin and lime, when bored with the show. The movement occasions no inconvenience to the other patrons in the row.

**whispering baritone.** The late Jack Smith, whose husky, whispered songs were immensely popular in the 1920's when he was the rage of London. He returned to the United States after a tour of the English provinces,

**whistle in the dressing-room, to.** Is said to portend a dismissal from the company, the one nearest the door being the unlucky one.

**whistle out.** The one who whistles in the dressing-room *whistles out* (of the company) a fellow player.

**White Hart varnish.** A solution often substituted for spirit gum. It is cheap and very efficient. Very popular with impecunious actors in their apprentice days of SHAKESPEARIENCE.

**whodunit.** A murder drama, or any mystery play. *Who done it* is the illiterate shape of *who did it* (the murder, or crime). 'Have you seen the new *whodunit* at the Playhouse?'

**white elephant.** An unlucky theatre or an unsuccessful play. When the Kings of Siam wanted to ruin a courtier, they presented him with a white elephant, whose sacred nature made its keep and attendants so expensive, that the owner was reduced to poverty.

(2) Scenery that hangs over the apron in front of the stage.

**white-haired boy.** Corresponds to blue-eyed boy, one in public favour. 'With two shows on Broadway, Christopher Fry has become the *white-haired boy* of the American theatre too . . .' (C.V.R. Thompson in a *Dail Express* article). Fry's brilliant *The Lady's not for Burning* and *Venus Observed* were two of the biggest London successes.

**whooper-up.** A raucous, noisy music-hall singer of the Victorian era. Cf. the very apt American variant, CALLITHUMPIAN.

**wicket.** The reception at the box-office. 'What's the *wicket* so far?' Acting Manager's from the game of cricket.

**Widow, the.** The ever popular operetta *The Merry Widow*, by Franz Lehar. (Artistes' abbreviation.)

**wind effect.** This can be produced by a record on a panatrope, or by the electrical wind effect worked by a sliding dimmer, which, moved up and down, can give the force of wind needed. See:

**wind machine.** Generally wind effects are created by electricity in modern theatres, but older houses, lacking such refinements, have recourse to the old-fashioned *wind machine*. This is a slatted drum turned by hand on a spindle. A sheet of canvas is stretched over the drum, made fast at one end to the base of the drum carriage, and at the other to a wooden batten, this in turn is attached to a treadle and the operator can tauten or slacken the canvas which, rubbed against the slats, gives the desired wind force.

**Wigan, that went better in.** A music-hall comedian's *sotto voce* remark when a gag fails to get over. Wigan is a music-hall joke that has become a national one in England, though why this Lancashire town should be so treated is not known. It may be that Wigan is so typically Lancastrian that many regional jokes are tried out there; and if they go well, it is safe to try them elsewhere.

**Wilk, on one's.** To obtain a complimentary ticket on one's *Wilkie Bard*, rhyming slang for (theatrical) *card*. It is a traditional privilege of artistes to be allowed free admission to theatres when the business will allow of complimentary seats being granted. The late Wilkie Bard was a favourite music-hall star.

**wines and spirits, among .he.** To be at the bottom of a music-hall bill. The name of the artiste is mixed up with the names of the wines and spirits merchants, advertised on the programme.

**wing (a part).** To play a part without knowing the text, relying upon the prompter *in the wings* to help one through.

**wing floods.** Light units mounted on telescopic stands placed in the wings to give additional lighting to a scene. Cf. **BOOMS**.

**wing men.** Stage-hands who attend to the wing flats, or handle properties that are taken on and off the stage through the wings.

**wings.** Flats that mask the edge of a setting. They are used in open sets. Cf. **PROFILE**.

**wire.** The flexible steel cable in the counter-weight system.

**with books.** The first few rehearsals, when players walk through their parts with the typewritten 'parts' in their hands, to mark the business, and positions suggested by the producer. In the

## **without books**

early stages of rehearsals several days are allowed for this before rehearsing a new act. When a reasonable time has been allowed for the learning of lines the books are dropped and the artistes 'act' their parts.

**without books.** To rehearse without the written scripts. See the preceding.

**wood borders.** Those borders used in forest and pastoral scenes generally, e.g. Shakespeare's *The Midsummer Night's Dream*, or in the pantomime *The Babes in the Wood*. A pattern of leaves and branches, perforated and backed with gauze, and well lit, wood borders give a very realistic picture of woodlands.

**Wood family, the.** Empty seats. Cf. PLUSH FAMILY, THE.

**wooden** (of a player, or audience). Dull and uninspired. Cf. FLAT.

**wooden arm, the.** A long pole with a large hand, behind which is a hook. The 'local talent' offering their wares in a talent-spotting competition at a music hall, are gently removed from the stage by the wooden arm when their turns are too painful to be borne.

**wooden O, the.** The Elizabethan stage, because it was so shaped.

**wooden walls.** The hoardings in front of a booth theatre on a fair-ground or on a village green. The posters depict the highlights in the drama.

**Woolworth circuit.** Jocular for a tour of the small dates. Woolworth connotes cheapness. This is no disparagement of the famous firm that runs the cheap stores, but a comparison. In the recent war the British Navy called their small-type aircraft carriers Woolworth Carriers.

**word, the.** A prompt from the corner. An artiste who forgets lines, often boldly—and very sensibly—asks the prompter: 'Give me the word please!' Cf. LINE.

**word-perfect.** A thoroughly assimilated part. DEAD LETTER PERFECT. 'We'll go through Act III tomorrow morning and I want you all to be word-perfect.'

**work.** To *play* at a theatre (music-hall term).

**working light.** A pilot light, or a single batten, used for rehearsals, or to provide enough illumination for the carrying out of repairs to scenery or for the cleaning of spotlight lamps or footlights.

**working line.** A length of rope that is in constant use during a production.

**working script.** A prompt copy of the play in which the movements, cues, and the producer's notes are made at rehearsal.

## **you could have heard a pin drop**

From this working script the fair, or prompt copy, for use during the run of the play, is made.

**workshop flex.** Small flex used for connecting semi-permanent spots and floods. It is not as large as a stage flex.

**worst night of the theatrical year.** Thursday before Good Friday when people are preparing to leave London for the Easter recess, and theatres are empty in consequence.

**wow.** A tremendous success. Said of a production generally, or of an individual performance. Echoic of the approbatory noise that greets such success.

**write in.** To apply to a theatrical management for employment, or to the manager of a theatre for a complimentary seat. 'I should *write in* for seats, they are not doing too well at the moment.'

## X

**X.** As a stage direction in the typewritten part it means that an artiste *crosses* the stage at that point.

**xylophone-act.** Either a 'straight' performance on the xylophone, or one in which a 'feature' has been created in which the instrument forms a background. Teddy Brown was an 'outsize' feature on the xylophone, and perhaps its finest exponent. From the Greek *xulon*, wood, and *phonē*, sound.

## Y

**yell.** A farcical comedy or burlesque, in which the 'yells' of laughter are continuous. 'The show was a *yell* from beginning to end.' Example, R. L. Delderfield's wartime farce *Worm's Eye View* which outran the famous record-breaker *Chu Chin Chow*. The term is obsolescent, the current one being 'a hoot'.

**Yorkshire comic.** A North Country comedian using the Yorkshire dialect.

**you could have heard a pin drop!** An old catch-phrase meaning that the audience was absorbed, and there was complete silence during the action of the scene.

**you're coddling!**

**you're coddling!** A theatrical expression of incredulity. 'You don't expect me to believe that, do you. *You're coddling.*' See COD.

**you're in full view!** Said of an artiste who is standing in the wings and visible to the audience in the front row of the stalls.

## Z

**zarzuela.** A short sketch or a stage cameo with music, performed in the Spanish manner. A precursor of the opera, it was first presented at court functions. Calderon's *Purpura de la Rosa* is a perfect example of this type of entertainment.

**zingaresca.** A Romany song, sometimes featured in vaudeville. *Zingaro* is the Italian for gypsy.

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